

LEONARD NIMOY 1931-2015 A TRIBUTE TO AN ICON

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AGE OF ULTRON & BEYOND

Joss Whedon reveals all on the unexpected future of the MCU

HOLOCRON UNLOCKED

STAR WARS

How Ahsoka Tano & The Clone Wars saved George Lucas from himself

INSIDE THE ISLAND

THUNDERBIRDS ARE... CGI?

Behind the scenes on the new vehicles

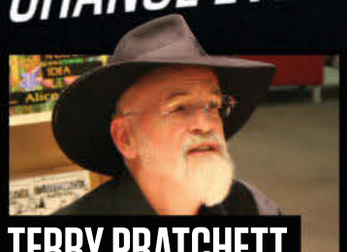
DRIVING TALK

MAD MAX

Tom Hardy on the balls-out return of Mad Max

DAREDEVIL

WHY MARVEL'S NETFLIX TEAM-UP WILL CHANGE EVERYTHING FOREVER



TERRY PRATCHETT
Discworld king remembered



BLADE
Fang-favourite or total mess?



FIRST LOOK

SUPERGIRL

How DC are winning the Kryptonian gender war

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The saying goes that it never rains; it pours.

Sadly, that maxim was proved all too true this month, as we said goodbye to two of the genre's most influential figures. On page 8, **SciFiNow** freelancer Edward Gross reflects on the times he spoke to Leonard Nimoy, who took sci-fi to the final frontier and beyond as Spock, proving to be not only one of sci-fi's most iconic characters, but also an ambassador to the genre.

Another dearly departed denizen of the genre, Terry Pratchett captured many a childhood and influenced even more with his decades-spanning *Discworld* series. To put it bluntly, much of what you see in the fantasy genre today owes a huge debt to him, and he'll be sorely missed.

Nimoy and Pratchett will be remembered not only for the books and films they made, but for all of the people they influenced and informed. SF isn't just a genre; it's a community, and nothing better encapsulates this trait than the outpouring of gratitude from those who were touched by them.

But even as two giants of the genre exit, sci-fi and fantasy continues to thrive, with this issue's's star-studded interviews bearing testament to this. Charlie Cox talks stepping into Ben Affleck's shoes in Netflix's *Daredevil*, Joss Whedon and the cast of *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* tell us how they plan to travel the road to *Infinity War*, Tom Hardy goes to Hell and back for *Mad Max: Fury Road*, and we track down Timothy Dalton on the set of P*enny Dreadful* Season Two.

All this and more awaits you on the awaiting pages. Live long and prosper…

Steve

Steve Wright
Deputy Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT HIGH-RISE

The prospect of one of the genre's most promising young directors working with one of its best-loved authors has got many – us included – excited for Ben Wheatley's adaptation of JG Ballard's haunting treatise on class warfare taking a dark turn. Tom Hiddleston adds a god-sized slice of geek credibility, while the likes of Elisabeth Moss, Luke Evans, Sienna Miller and Reece Shearsmith supplement an all-star cast.

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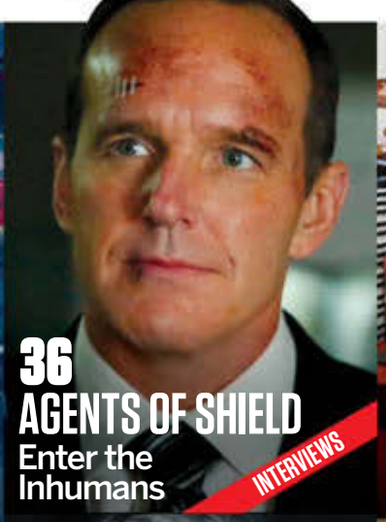
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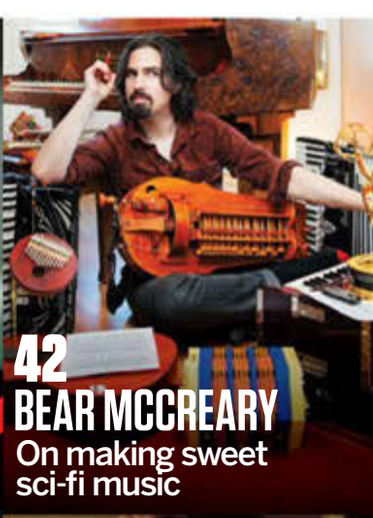
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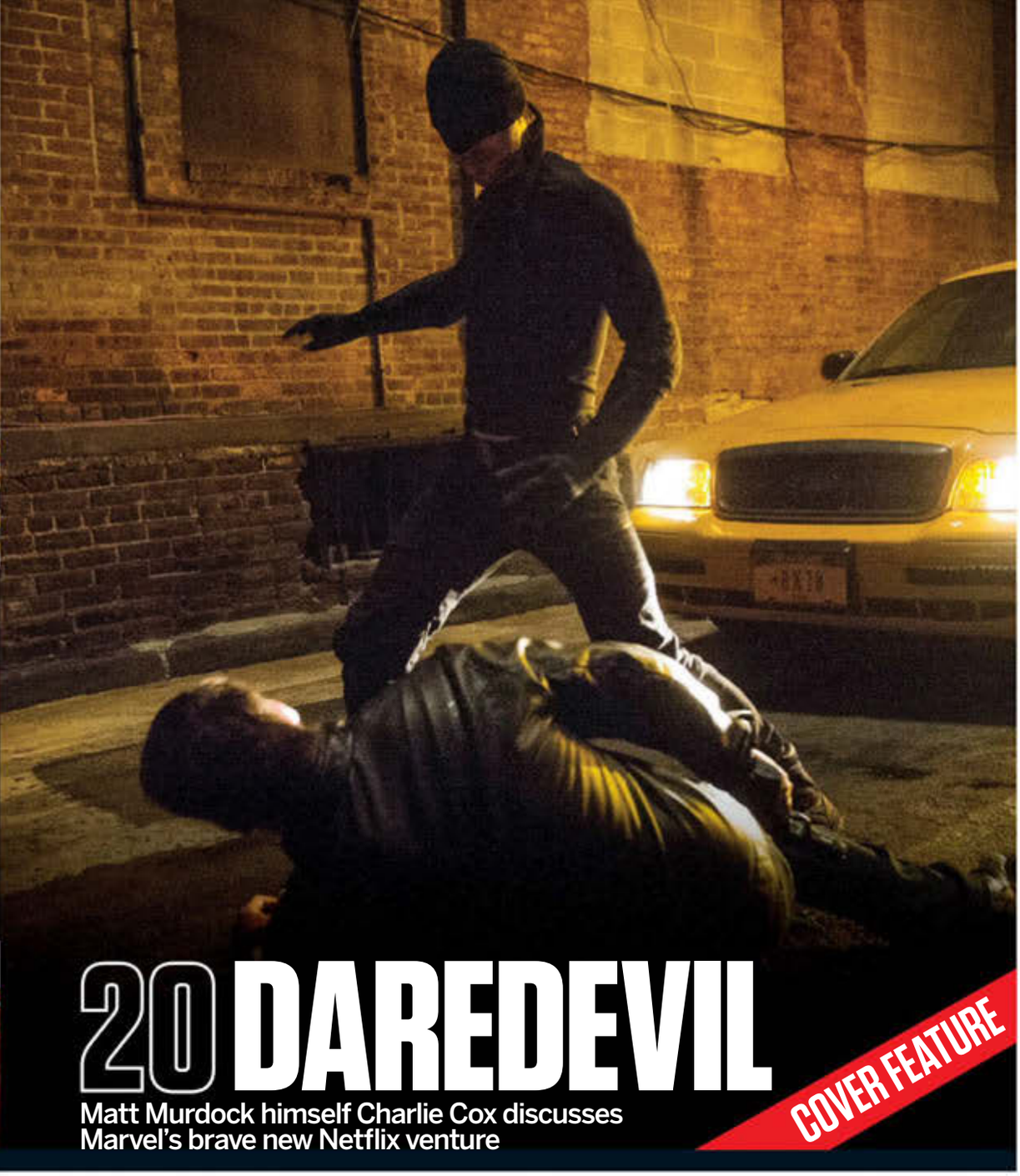
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MEET THE TEAM

Q. What power would you choose to have if you were a superhero?



James Hoare
Editor in Chief
A. Mind reading
Mainly what people think about me, but I think I can guess.



Steve Wright
Deputy Editor
A. Not having to sleep
Insomnia without any of the drawbacks. I'd get so much stuff done...



Jonathan Hatfull
Senior Staff Writer
A. Breathing fire
Not too much, but enough to get my point across.



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Staff Writer
A. Stretchy arms
So I can reach stuff without having to get up. Pretty handy.



Marcus Faint
Senior Designer
A. Ability to clone
I can't imagine just how much I could achieve with 50 versions of me!



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Steve

Steve Wright
Deputy editor







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We pay tribute to the master of the Discworld



Even in later years, Nimoy has always spoken fondly of his role.



Even space agency NASA paid tribute to the work of Nimoy in a statement.



He returned to *Star Trek* as Spock Prime in JJ Abrams reboot in 2009.

LIVE LONG AND PROSPER

HE IS, AND EVER SHALL BE SPOCK

On 27 February 2015, the world of sci-fi lost one of its greatest icons. We reflect on the life and achievements of Leonard Nimoy, who as Captain Spock, helped make Star Trek what it is today

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**

It was nearly 30 years ago, but I can remember nervously placing my cassette recorder on his desk, clicking record and asking him, "So, ready for another up-close and personal interview?"

"Oh yeah," he sighed.

It was November 1986, and this was the tail end of a gruelling two days of doing one of those up-close and personal interviews after another to promote the soon-to-be-released *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*. No doubt, I was very much aware, he had answered the same questions repeatedly.

Yet once Leonard began to speak, he came to life, his words filling with vigour, his manner expressing the enthusiasm of a child playing with a new toy that he was finally ready to share with the rest of the world. As he spoke, I found myself in an interesting position. On the one hand, sitting there was an actor/director whose growth as an artist was impressive and whose words conveyed a great sense of thoughtfulness, intelligence and humour. On the other, an occasional statement, turn of the head or slight cocking of an eyebrow couldn't help but convey the essence of Mr Spock.

Even before his passing on 27 February 2015, Leonard Nimoy had been heavily on my mind. *Star Trek* has become very much a living thing as we've moved through the decades and the franchise's highs and lows, and with all of that has come the renewed recognition of how much a part of it all Leonard has been.

In one of our interviews, *Star Trek* writer/story editor Dorothy Fontana explained to me, "Gene Roddenberry asked me to read the first bible for *Star Trek* in 1964. This was the very first proposal; the series presentation. I read it and said, 'I have only one question: who's going to play Mr Spock?' He pushed a picture of Leonard Nimoy across the table. I, of course, knew Leonard because he had appeared in my first [script sale], *The Tall Man*."

Roddenberry himself added, "Leonard Nimoy was the one actor I definitely had in mind. We had worked together when I was producing *The Lieutenant*. Leonard had been a guest star, and I was struck at the time with his high Slavic cheekbones and interesting face. I said to myself, 'If I ever do this science fiction thing I want to do, he would make a great alien.'"

That alien, of course, was Vulcan/human hybrid Mr Spock, science officer of the starship Enterprise, who would constantly wage an inner struggle between his two halves. Robert Butler, who directed Leonard in 'The Cage', observes, "Spock was an extremely attractive character right off the bat. Leonard was always thought to be a very fine character actor, really, who was able to make the audience think that Spock was foreign, but not so foreign that he was inaccessible and uncomfortable for the audience. We could make the jump to his planet without it causing us any emotional discomfort. That's where the success of his character lies."

Between the first and second pilots of *Star Trek* (the second being 'Where No Man Has Gone Before'), Leonard's Spock went through a marked transformation. While the first episode had moments of unbridled emotion, for the most part this was gone, and would further be buried as the character transitioned to the weekly series.

When I met with director Joseph Sargent on the Bahamas set of *Jaws: The Revenge*, the conversation turned to his directing the first weekly episode of *Star Trek*, and thoughts of Leonard.

"He was unhappy, because his character was without emotion," reflected Sargent. "He said, 'How can I play a character without emotion? I don't know how to do that. I'm going to be on one note throughout the entire series.' I agreed with him, and we worked like hell to give him some emotional context, but Gene said, 'No way, the

>>

very nature of this character's contribution is that he isn't an earthling. As a Vulcan, he is intellect over emotion.' Leonard was ready to quit, because he didn't know how he was going to do it."

But as Leonard conveyed, he came up with a personal solution: "Spock is not a character without emotions; Spock is a Vulcan who has learned to control his emotions. But believe me, 12 hours a day, five days a week of controlling your emotions can have some strange effects on you. I remember one time in a meeting room having a conference with a couple of writers and suddenly finding myself crying for no reason at all. The emotions just had to come out somewhere, sometime. So I welcomed the opportunities to do scenes or episodes where Spock had some kind of emotional release."

Leonard's portrayal of Spock quickly ended up creating an emotional release in the show's viewers, almost instantly elevating the character's popularity and turning the actor into a cult hero. The end result was that Spock and Kirk became a team; a team that would define the original *Star Trek* from that point forward and whose essence would still be felt in JJ Abrams' 2009 franchise reboot.

When *Star Trek* ended its run in 1969, Leonard quickly proved himself to be the most successful of the cast, replacing Martin Landau in *Mission: Impossible*, and appearing on Broadway in the 1973 revival of *Full Circle* and the 1974 production of *Equus*, in between voicing Spock in *Star Trek: The Animated Series*. At the beginning of that 1973-74 series, he proved the depth of the person he was. To save money, the production had initially decided not to include Uhura and Sulu actors Nichelle Nichols and George Takei, even though their characters would be visually represented – but voiced by, respectively – Majel Barrett and James Doohan.

Said Leonard, "That's when I took my stand. Not only had they not been hired, but their characters were written in the show and being played by other people. I was appalled! How could they do this?" When Leonard threatened not to do the show unless the situation was rectified, it was indeed taken care of.

Following *Equus*, he toured in various stage productions (including a one-man-show devoted to artist Vincent Van Gogh, and one in which he starred as Sherlock Holmes), hosted the syndicated television series *In Search Of...* and starred in Philip Kaufman's 1978 production of *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*. In the decades to come, he would be involved in a wide variety of other projects, ranging from the big screen to the small (including a recurring part as William Bell in the series *Fringe*), more stage work, recording albums, writing a pair of autobiographies, and pursuing his passions for art and photography (the latter of which resulted in his book of photos, *Shekhina*).

Through it all, *Star Trek* was ever present. There was disappointment (*Star Trek: The Motion Picture*), great joy (*Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan*), opportunity (directing *Star Trek III: The Search For Spock* and *Star Trek IV*, which led to numerous non-*Trek* films), and a sense of closure (*Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, plus a two-part appearance on *The Next Generation*). And then, of course, there was his appearance as Spock Prime in the 2009 film. I interviewed him then, and it was clear that he had reached an interesting perspective on his life.

"I'm much more settled, much more comfortable with whom I am, where I am and what has become before and what I see before me," he related. "I'm extremely satisfied that I've had a lot of great opportunities and put out a lot of energy and been involved in a lot of very interesting work. And now my personal life has taken a much more prominent place. I do a lot of photography, which is very gratifying, and that's my creative outlet. I just feel very comfortable with where I've arrived at."

It was clear that this comfort was settling in as far back as 1986, when we sat in his office in New York's Gulf & Western building and he expressed feelings about the *Star Trek* phenomenon that would stay with him until the end.

"I'm amazed by it," he offered. "Somebody was saying that at times in our lives you feel like a particle of matter, and there are other times when you feel as though you are part of a very large process. You step back and say, 'Wow!' It's the 'Wow!' that catches up with me still once in a while. It's spanning generations. Kids have grown up and had children who are now watching the show. It's quite extraordinary.

"I'm very grateful that it happened," he concluded our conversation. "I feel a great sense of accomplishment. Overall, we've done some great work. I hope that I haven't taken myself too seriously too often. I hope that the general fallout is positive. I think it is. I'm very pleased when I hear that people's lives have been affected positively because of *Star Trek*. I have often said that if I had to choose between characters that I would have to be identified with, I would choose Spock. I've had very good, positive feelings about it."



The partnership between Spock and Kirk has become legendary.



One of his most iconic moments was his (temporary) death in *The Wrath Of Khan*.



LIVE LONG AND PROSPER

SOME OF NIMOY'S MANY TRIBUTES

"We stood on your shoulders, and wouldn't have had a galaxy to explore if you hadn't been there, first. Thank you, Leonard, Rest in peace."
Wil Wheaton, Twitter

"Leonard lived his life so beautifully and with such grace. He was a very honourable person, and his life reflected that. His family reflects that. I lost my father at a very young age, and Leonard came to occupy a space in my life that was like a father figure. I had this person that I could look to with such respect. He was refined. And he cultivated a sense of dignity and respect for other people."
Zachary Quinto, The Guardian

"I loved him like a brother. We will all miss his humour, his talent, and his capacity to love."
William Shatner, Twitter

"He was an extraordinarily talented man, but he was also a very decent human being. His talent embraced directing as well as acting and photography. He was a very sensitive man, and we feel his passing very much."
George Takei, MSNBC

"RIP Leonard Nimoy. So many of us at NASA were inspired by Star Trek. Boldly go..."
NASA, Twitter

"Dearest Leonard. What a man you were. What a life you lived. As funny and thoughtful and generous and loving as you were talented. You taught us all, at every encounter. We will miss and love you forever."
JJ Abrams, Twitter

"In 2007, I had the chance to meet Leonard in person. It was only logical to greet him with the Vulcan salute, the universal sign for "Live long and prosper." And after 83 years on this planet – and on his visits to many others – it's clear Leonard Nimoy did just that. Michelle and I join his family, friends, and countless fans who miss him so dearly today."
Barack Obama, Vulture

© Rex

Just how geeky are our favourite sci-fi stars?

GEEK-O-METER



"DIGGLE MIGHT LIVE ON IN THE COMICS FOR YEARS TO COME"
DAVID RAMSEY

DAVID RAMSEY

70 TOTAL GEEK RATING

GEEK CRED

As John Diggle in *Arrow*, Ramsey has deservedly gained plaudits for his performances. In 2013, DC wrote in Diggle's character to the mainstream *Green Arrow* comics. "It's a testament to what the fans have tuned into. I'm really glad that DC, Warner Bros and the powers that be took notice and put me into the canon. 20 years from now, if Diggle's still in the comics, someone might play him again. He might live on for years to come, so it's a great honour."

18/20

GEEK KNOWLEDGE

Even before he was starring in *Arrow*, Ramsey was a fan of the comics, although he tended to err more towards DC's main rival. "I was always in a comic-book store, but I really was a Marvel boy. *X-Men* really resonated with me and kids of my age generation. I grew up during the Bill Bixby *Incredible Hulk* series, and the whole Marvel genre was ingrained in me. I didn't tune into DC as much; that was more when I was an adolescent."

15/20

COMMITMENT

A lot of work goes into the fight scenes, with the actors putting in a lot of stuntwork, but there are some things even Ramsey can't handle: squeezing into Oliver Queen's suit. Ramsey was provided with a different one for the scenes in which Diggle dons the green hood. "I think if I actually put on his suit, I probably couldn't get my arm in, it's that skin-tight! He's a big guy, but I'm a little bigger, not by much, but just a little larger in certain places."

12/20

FAN POWER

Being in a show with as big a fan following as *Arrow*, getting sent stuff by loyal viewers is part of the territory. Ramsey was particularly pleased with one of his gifts that he received. "We receive all kinds of artwork, and that's always awesome, but I'd probably say… I received a bobblehead, in a suit with a gun, and it was awesome, I have it on my table, that's probably my favourite one." Could it be long before we are all owners of a Diggle bobblehead?

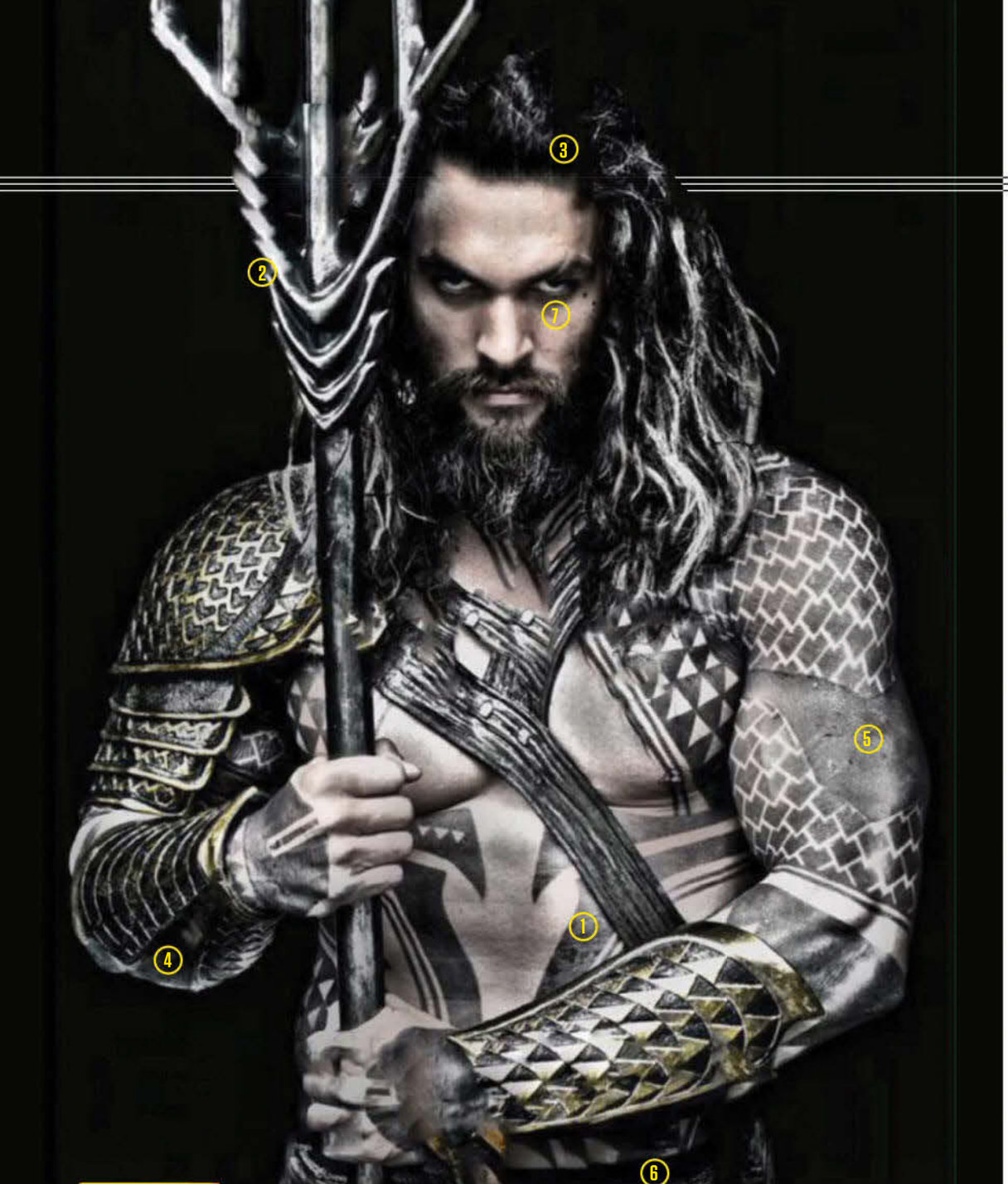
13/20

NEXT MOVE

More and more characters appear to be suiting up in *Arrow*, and despite rumours, Diggle likely won't be following suit, although Ramsey hints that he might be gaining some top-level military hardware to play with. "Maybe he does wear some kind of concealment in the field… it's a bit of a challenge, because part of his appeal is his everyman-ness. But something's coming… maybe some kind or artillery gear he has when working with Arrow in the field."

12/20

Arrow is currently airing on Thursday evenings at 8pm on Sky 1.



MAN OF SEAL

PRAWN OF JUSTICE

Aquaman is making waves with his brand new look

When *Game Of Thrones*' Dothraki chieftain Jason Momoa was confirmed to be playing Aquaman on the big screen in *Batman V Superman*, every pre-conceived notion about Arthur Curry being the sparkling weenie he is in the comics went straight out the window. No one would dare talk smack about the Trident of Neptune when it's got Momoa at the other end of it. Here's our guide to Aquaman's new look, and why you should stop pointing and laughing and finally cower in fear...

1. MOMO-ABS

The new Aquaman doesn't have time for shirts, not when there are sharks to talk to. He's ditched that hideous skin-tight scale top in favour of an au naturel look. Besides, with his torso covered he'd have nothing on show to prove that he's bigger and better than you.

2. TRIDENT OF NEPTUNE

Aquaman's trident is a magical weapon that grants its wielder great power and the divine right to rule the sea. It also makes a great accessory in both the practical and aesthetic sense, and gives Momoa something to clutch on to, ensuring his toned biceps are flexed at all times.

3. SURFER HAIR

The Aquaman of yesteryear's tidy, cropped do was a bit too Steve Rogers for a Snyder film. Momoa is shaking things up Hawaiian style with his voluminous surfer dreads. His bushy beard and vaguely ominous eyebrows complete the look with an element of intimidation.

4. ARM ARMOUR

Technically, the armour was a good call for protective reasons, but there's no getting past the fact that it just looks so damn good. The gold breaks up an otherwise dull outfit. In the paraphrased words of Coco Chanel, a sea king should be two things: classy and fabulous.

5. TATTOO SLEEVE

For some reason, Aquaman doesn't need protection for both of his shoulders. But instead of going for an uneven look, he has an armour pattern tattooed onto his bare skin to match the other side. If that doesn't graduate Aquaman from weenie to winner then frankly nothing will.

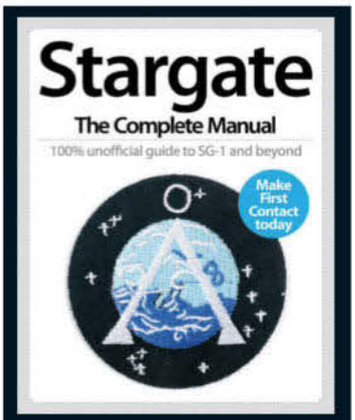
6. STATEMENT BELT BUCKLE

The bold gold belt buckle is one of the few aspects of Momoa's costume that is reminiscent of the original Aquaman comics, but it's purely ornamental. Where Batman's belt is utilised to carry his equipment, Aquaman's adds a certain je ne sais quoi to his grungy ensemble.

7. A LIBERAL AMOUNT OF GUYLINER

A key piece of make-up that should be in every warrior's vanity drawer is a reliable eyeliner. Dark shadows around the eyes make for a more intense look. You want it thick enough to be menacing, but not so thick that you can't see. For Aquaman, waterproof is probably best.

Aquaman will be released in cinemas on 27 July 2018.



STARGATE: THE COMPLETE MANUAL

SciFiNow's 100% unofficial guide to SG-1 and beyond

Here comes the latest instalment in the Complete Manual series: our guide to one of the longest-running sagas of all time. **Stargate: The Complete Manual** digital edition is available to download from iTunes now.

Inside, we run through all 214 episodes that made up *Stargate SG-1*, and delve behind the scenes of spin-off *Stargate Universe*.

And that's not all: we speak to series stalwarts Robert Caryle and Robert Picardo, and take a journey through the shows' many mysterious worlds.

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I CAN SEE YOUR HALO, HALO, HALO

Luke Cage star Mike Colter talks Halo: Nightfall

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

Before becoming Luke Cage in Netflix's new series, due out online later this year, actor Mike Colter was pushed to the limit in the Icelandic equivalent of the middle of nowhere while filming *Halo: Nightfall*.

"The elements, when you are out in the middle of nowhere, are much more bleak," he remembers. "It's cold, rugged terrain, hard to walk on, hard to even find a place to sit down. It was quite miserable. We were all like, 'Oh God, when will it end?' You're soaked down to your knickers and it's just bad. Any time you think about being uncomfortable, you're uncomfortable."

In addition to the harsh landscape and dreary weather, the cast had to struggle through it all while wearing huge, bulky combat suits.

"I think they had to go to actors who were new to this. If they approached an actor who had done this before, the negotiations were going to be completely different!" he laughs.

"If they said, 'We want you to do this movie with this huge suit on,' the response is going to be, 'Whoa, stop right there!' The suit weighed about two stone, and added to your body weight you can't really do anything. You can barely go to the bathroom on your own, let alone sit down and relax. If you just stood in that uniform without doing anything you'd be tired. [We were] sprinting around, running up hills, falling, getting up again take after take after take!"

Despite everything, Colter insists that he remembers the experience positively. "I had a great time, but when I think about the actual shooting of it, it was gruelling, but I look back on it fondly. I made some great friends. But make no mistake about it: it was definitely not a picnic."

Halo: Nightfall is available to buy now on Blu-ray and DVD.



Filming in Iceland was no easy task, as the actors were "soaked down to [their] knickers."

BEING MAORI



***Tatau* follows in the footsteps of the successes of *Being Human* and *In The Flesh*.**





The show was filmed on location in the South Pacific.

CULTURE SHOCKS

Star Joe Layton on why Maori-set supernatural drama Tatau is the new Being Human

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

BBC Three has had a pretty good track record when it comes to supernatural dramas. Admittedly, they haven't always lasted as long as they could or should have done, but series like *Being Human*, *In The Flesh* and *The Fades* have been among the very best that the UK has produced in recent years. Now, it's *Tatau*'s turn to step up to the plate.

"What's great, and what's been really exciting for me, growing up watching BBC Three shows like *In The Flesh* and *Being Human*, is they're both incredible shows, pushing new drama for a young audience," says newcomer and star Joe Layton. "I hope that *Tatau* is taking on that mantle and doing our bit, because it's a really special channel to me."

Layton and Theo Barklem-Biggs (*Kingsman: The Secret Service*) play Kyle and Budgie, two English lads who are going nowhere in London and decide to grab the opportunity to travel to the Cook Islands, where they soon find themselves in the midst of a supernatural mystery that draws on Maori myths and legends. "It brings a lot of things that are kind of hot at the moment, like a supernatural vibe and throws them into completely new waters," Layton explains. "The South Pacific was a culture and a world that I had no experience of apart from walking past a travel agents and seeing the pictures of the white sandy beaches and the clear water. But when I read the script I got a glimpse into these people's culture and the depth and the richness of the stories that they have to offer."

Having filmed on location with an incredible cast that includes the legendary Temuera Morrison (*Star Wars*, *Once Were Warriors*), Layton tells us he can't wait for the rest of the world to experience *Tatau*. "We've got all these stories coming out of the ground, as fast as we can deal with one something else pops up," he tells us. "It will throw the audience a bit of a curveball. It's edge of your seat stuff."

Tatau airs on Saturday evenings on BBC Three.

FIVE THINGS WITH NICOLE BEHARIE

The Sleepy Hollow star on the fan reaction and keeping Abbie grounded

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

1 Finishing strong

Sleepy Hollow may have finished its divisive second season in the US, but we've still got the finale to look forward to here in the UK, and star Nicole Beharie tells us that we're in for a treat. "You are going to get a really interesting end of the season," she promises. "New characters test the relationship between Ichabod and Abbie and reveal a great deal more about the nature of the battle that they're fighting. There's a lot more to explore, and once you get towards the end of the season, you get to see a lot more of Abbie. So I hope that the fans stick it out."

2 Honest Abbie

Fan reaction to *Sleepy Hollow* Season Two has been somewhat mixed, but the character of Abbie and Beharie's performance have been consistently adored. Beharie tells us that part of the character's charm is her consistency. "Abbie has been very steady along the way, despite the world getting bigger," she explains. "She's always been a truth speaker, even before she believed entirely in what Ichabod was saying. Then there's a big heart to her. Even though she's tough, she has a heart and compassion and sensitivity that I really enjoy playing. It's very balanced character, even though there are really extreme sides of the coin."

3 Twists and turns

This season has seen some pretty major shocks and characters making unexpected early exits, and Beharie tells us that she embraces the surprises. "I tend to want to work on what I'm working on," she explains. "I think that that's a big part of my angle for storytelling, as sort of the eyes of the audience. I'm the anchor for the modern perspective. That's one of the things this year that I've been playing with, making sure that she doesn't just jump in. We're asking the audience to make some big leaps of faith, so she has to move through that first in order for everyone to follow through."

4 The fans have spoken

The SleepyHeads are nothing if not passionate, and Beharie tells us that she's been very much aware of their feelings about the show. "Oh yeah!" she laughs. "All of the fan artwork, fan fiction, opinions and notions of how the narrative should go. They have no idea that it means the world; it's basically our currency as artists. And on the flipside, every now and then someone's like, 'That sucked,' or whatever, and sometimes I agree! It's refreshing, because sometimes they say things that you can't say! It keeps us honest. It's coming from a loving place, because otherwise you just change the channel."

5 Hashtag Ichabbie

Beharie still can't quite believe the crazy mix of ingredients that makes up *Sleepy Hollow*. "It's a bugged-out story, right? You've got this black lady from New York who's a cop, and then a Washington Irving story, seriously? A mash-up of that with Biblical Revelations? That's the kitchen that we're cooking in!" However, she agrees that the relationship between Ichabod and Abbie has remained the anchor. "Yeah, who doesn't love an odd couple? You don't know if they're going to kiss or fight, and people have their opinions. I think everyone's waiting for whatever they want to see happen, and that for me is really rewarding."

Sleepy Hollow Season Two is currently airing on the Universal Channel.



"ABBIE HAS BEEN VERY STEADY ALONG THE WAY, DESPITE THE WORLD GETTING BIGGER"

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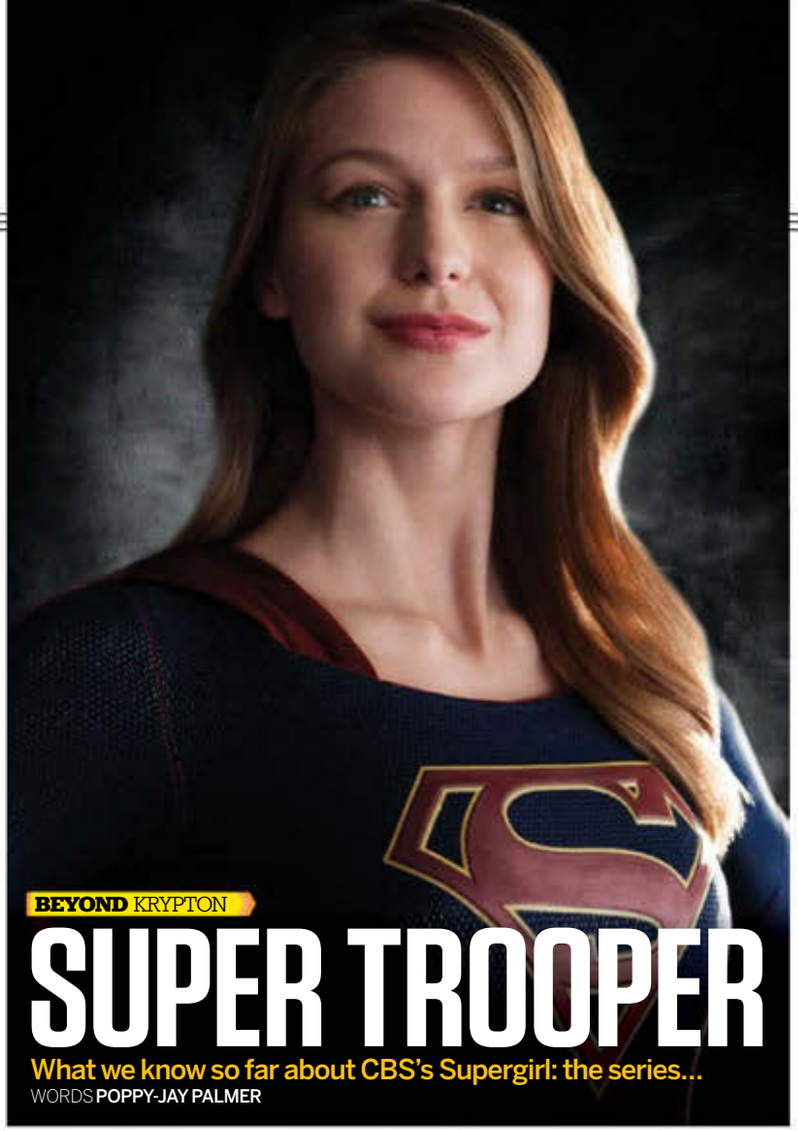
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BEYOND KRYPTON

SUPER TROOPER

What we know so far about CBS's Supergirl: the series...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER



Calista Flockhart is on board as media boss Cat Grant.



Former *Lois & Clark* star Dean Cain is mooted for Fred Danvers.



Original Supergirl Helen Slater is rumoured to be playing Sylvia.

After the success of *Arrow* and *The Flash*, creator Greg Berlanti has decided it's time for a female-led TV series. And who better to front it than Krypton's own Supergirl? Although the show will air on a different network to the others (CBS), Berlanti has stated that he'd still be open to a series crossover.

Going on Melissa Benoist's contagious smile in the recent promo images, we're anticipating something slightly more joyful than *Man Of Steel*.

MELISSA BENOIST AS KARA ZOR-EL

The series is focusing on the Kara Zor-El incarnation of Supergirl, and will be fronted by *Glee* star Benoist. 12 years after being sent away from Krypton and taken in by the Danvers family, 24-year-old Kara still keeps her superhuman powers hidden. But one day, an unexpected disaster occurs, and she is force to reveal her true self.

MEHCAD BROOKS AS JAMES 'JIMMY' OLSEN

The young photojournalist was always more familiar with Clark Kent in the *Superman* comics, working with them at the Daily Planet, but there was a storyline in which he married Kara Zor-El, indicating that he will be Kara's main love interest in the new series.

CALISTA FLOCKHART AS CAT GRANT

Cat Grant has been promoted from gossip columnist for the Daily Planet to Kara's boss and founder of CatCo, a media conglomerate. *Ally McBeal* actress Calista Flockhart is taking on the role, which is described in the official character description as "J Lo by way of Anna Wintour". Sweet.

DAVID HAREWOOD AS HANK HENSHAW

It's looking like most of the aggravation will come from *Homeland*'s David Harewood as Hank Henshaw, a former CIA agent and current head of the Department of Extra-Normal Operations, obsessed with intergalactic intel. He goes on high alert when Kara reveals her otherworldly abilities, and thinks they pose a threat to humankind.

CHYLER LEIGH AS ALEXANDRA 'ALEX' DANVERS

Grey's Anatomy's Chyler Leigh is playing the doctor again as Kara's foster sister Alex Danvers. A sisterly bond and a thirst for knowledge will lead to Dr Danvers trying to learn all that she can about Kara's Kryptonian culture, but the fact that Alex works for Henshaw at the DEO will likely get in the way of her research.

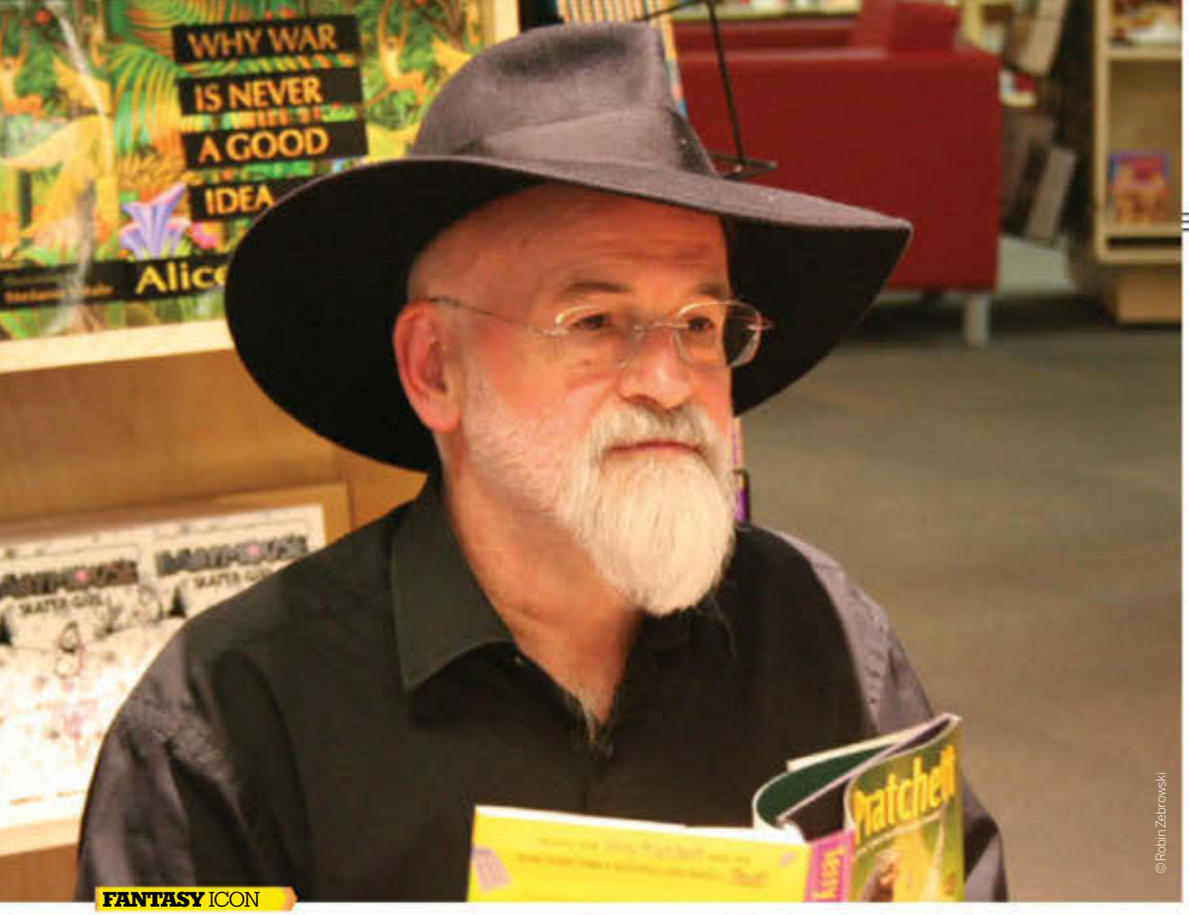
HELEN SLATER AS SYLVIA DANVERS

In one of the best examples of fan service ever, they've added the original live-action Supergirl, Helen Slater, to the cast. Though it's not been officiallly confirmed, we're presuming that Slater will be playing Kara's adoptive mother, Sylvia.

DEAN CAIN AS FRED DANVERS

As if Slater's involvement wasn't already enough to make any Super-fan faint, Clark of *Lois & Clark* fame, aka Dean Cain, is also making an appearance. Like with Slater, the identity of Cain's character hasn't been disclosed, but it's likely he will be playing Fred Danvers, Kara's adoptive dad, creating the most super TV family known to mankind.

Supergirl will air on CBS in the US later in the year.



© Robin Zebrowski

FANTASY ICON

"AT LAST SIR TERRY, WE MUST WALK TOGETHER"

The SciFiNow team pay a personal tribute to Terry Pratchett

On 12 March, one of the fantasy genre's true giants passed away. From *The Carpet People* to *Good Omens* to his towering achievement of the *Discworld* series, Sir Terry Pratchett's imagination and wit is inimitable and unforgettable. His ability to conjure a world that was both fantastical and instantly familiar was combined with a razor-sharp sense of humour and love of the absurd that made every book a joy to read.

He leaves behind a body of work that we've started to celebrate here.



JAMES HOARE

I was instinctively drawn to Terry Pratchett. While rummaging through a library sale I found myself clutching yellowing copies of *Guards! Guards!* and *Wyrd Sisters* like they'd always been wedged in my trotters, as if they belonged there. The bulbous proportions, constant cartoonish motion and suffocating *Where's Wally?* detail of Josh Kirby's art seemed so racy, adult and irreverent, so rich with promise yet so comforting with concepts I understood: witches, warriors, dragons and kings. What lurked beyond these kinetic covers ended up being to my pre-teens and early teens what my parents had been to my pre-pre-teens: Terry Pratchett showed me the world and a way of living in it. He taught me to relish the irrationality and absurdity of it all, he schooled me in scepticism and humanism, and most of all he encouraged me to roll words around in my hands like Play-Doh and see what new shapes I could make.



POPPY-JAY PALMER

I read my first *Discworld* novel – *Going Postal* – during the school holidays one year. I remember having to check it out the library three times. It took me almost the whole summer to read! Pratchett's unique style is always a joy, and has caused countless painful giggle fits.



STEVE WRIGHT

My route to Pratchett was an unconventional one. After playing a demo disk of *Discworld 2: Missing Presumed...!?* on the PlayStation, I was hooked on his weird and wonderful world, and wanted more. My logic was 'what better place to start than at the beginning?', and I borrowed a copy of *The Colour Of Magic* from my local library. The rest, as they say, is history.



JEN NEAL

As a contagiously ill ten-year-old who couldn't see people for two weeks, I discovered *The Hogfather*. I listened to it non-stop the entire time. Having never liked Christmas, I adored the idea of Hogwatch, Death delivering presents to kids, and the added peril of Mr Teatime. It was the perfect company.



JONATHAN HATFULL

I can't remember how my ten-year-old self came across a copy of *Mort*. Specifically, I can't remember if it was my copy or if a classmate lent it to me. I do remember being drawn in by the cover and falling in love with the strange, hilarious and brilliant Discworld and the character of Death. I remember reading it over and over again until the cover fell off, and tracking down every other Discworld book that featured Death before starting the whole series from the beginning. If that copy of *Mort* belonged to someone else, I don't remember returning it.

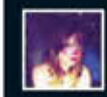
Discovering Discworld

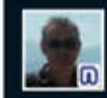
YOU PICK YOUR FAVOURITE TERRY PRATCHETT NOVELS...


"*The Colour Of Magic*, I had never read a comedy fantasy book before, so this book holds a special place in my heart." **@quidditysea**


"*Soul Music*. The first I read, when I was 14/15. The sympathetic Death helped me a lot. TP helped teach me English. :)" **@SelinaWilken**

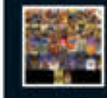

"Really hard to pick just one, but maybe *Lords And Ladies*, because it was heaps of fun." **@Dynvain**


"*Equal Rites*, it was my first introduction to the Discworld and Granny Weatherwax." **@Cascararogue**


"*Night Watch*. Read 1st two Discworld books in 80s, didn't like and never picked up another until this- 2008. Now Pratchett convert." **@Tim_McNulty**


"*Reaper Man*, the first one I read when I was about 12 and over 20 years later it's still my favourite." **@AndySpex**


"*Guards! Guards!* I just love the characters, especially Carrot." **@sian_73**


"*Thief Of Time*. Epic philosophy lesson, Matrix tribute, ode to chocolate and love story wrapped up into several hundred pages." **@pratchettjob**


"Choosing is so difficult that I'm just going to say *Reaper Man*, as that's the only one I've read enough for the cover to fall off." **@devilsfootsteps**


"*The Last Continent* for sure. First book I ever read front to back and over again, and it sparked my interest in Pratchett!" **@ForgottenRomeo**


"*Guards! Guards!*. I love all the guards series but this is the one that dragged me into Pratchetts world so I wouldn't be without it" **@rwprest**


"As you'd guess from the avi, *Reaper Man* is my favourite (only slightly ahead of the rest) as it really explored the life of Death" **@nullfuture**

REBEL CAUSE



Season Two will see tough times for the rebels, being compared to *The Empire Strikes Back* in tone.





The finale played host to the returns of Ahsoka Tano (left) and Darth Vader.

REBEL DAWN

Actress Ashley Eckstein on the surprise return of Ahsoka Tano in Star Wars: Rebels

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

The finale of the first season of *Star Wars: Rebels* proved to be just as knuckle-clenchingly tense as we've come to expect from the creators of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. Seeing Kanan, Ezra and co live to fight another day – defeating the Inquisitor and destroying Tarkin's flagship in the process – the big reveal was the identity of their previously anonymous contact 'Fulcrum' as Anakin Skywalker's former padawan, Ahsoka Tano.

After her open-ended *Clone Wars* exit, fans were waiting for when she'd next appear, with many correctly guessing Fulcrum's identity beforehand. For her part, voice actress Ashley Eckstein admits that keeping things under wraps was tricky. "It was extremely hard to keep the secret!" she says. "Before Fulcrum appeared in the episodes, it was easier to say that it was all too early to tell if Ahsoka was going to appear in *Rebels*. However once Fulcrum appeared in *Rebels* and the fans accurately guessed that it was me, I practically went into hiding!"

With the first episodes being a massive success, Season Two is already on the way, with showrunner describing it in an interview with IGN as being "more like *The Empire Strikes Back*", as backed up by the appearance of Darth Vader himself in Season One finale 'Fire Across The Galaxy'. Despite the rising stakes, don't expect to see Ahsoka buddying up with the crew of the Ghost every week. "Ahsoka will be a recurring role," says Eckstein. "She is on her own journey, and will continue to be a bit mysterious."

Nevertheless, the vast majority of fans are happy just to have her back, having been a firm favourite in *The Clone Wars*. Eckstein shares their enthusiasm. "It's a dream to continue to bring Ahsoka to life. Having the opportunity to originate a character in the *Star Wars* universe is like winning the lottery, and I will forever be humbled by this opportunity."

Season Two of *Star Wars: Rebels* will air on Disney XD later in the year.

GALAXY DEFENDERS

Why the new animation will be inspired by the movie

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

Those who loved James Gunn's *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, but can't imagine how they'll be able to hold on until April 2017 for the sequel can rejoice, as an animated series inspired by the film is on the way to Disney XD.

It will see Star-Lord, Gamora, Drax, Rocket Racoon and Groot reunite, with a number of familiar faces along for the ride. "I play Yondu, and did the voice of Cosmo, the Russian telepathic dog," reveals voice actor James Arnold Taylor, referring to the mutt who appeared alongside Howard the Duck in the memorable *Guardians* post-credit sting. "So I get to be two of these great side characters, which are fun to do, and we have a fantastic cast. It's going to be a fun show, it's written very smart, but it has to be, as the movie was very smart."

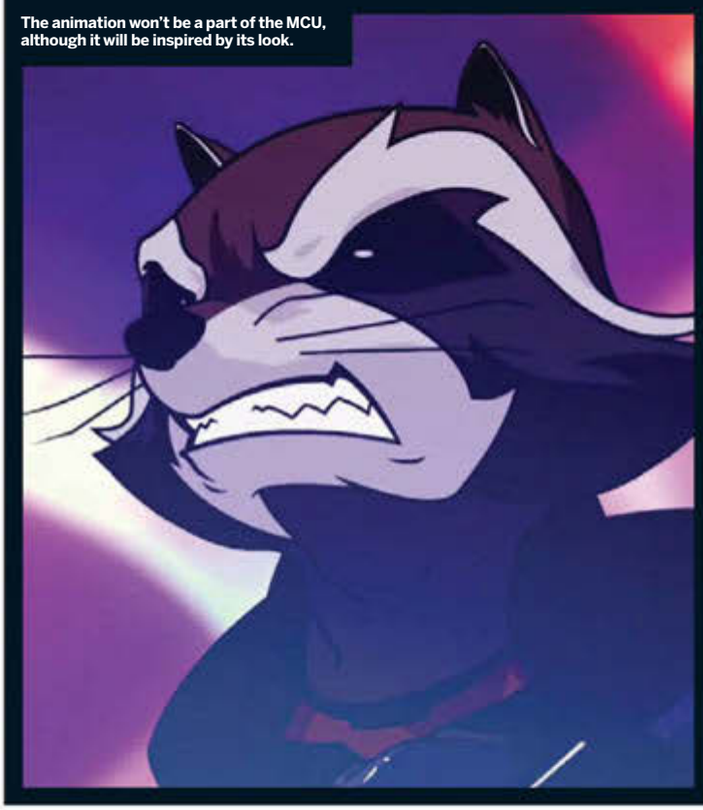
Despite clearly being inspired by the visual look and art direction of the series, it seems likely that the animated series will take place in a different continuity to the live-action one, with director Gunn angrily refuting rumours to the contrary in an interview with SlashFilm, calling it "totally separate from the Marvel Cinematic Universe." With Taylor saying that "it's set in that same time period," and admitting to putting on his best Michael Rooker impression for the Yondu role, it seems likely that the two will have more in common than Gunn cares to admit.

Guardians Of The Galaxy will air on Disney XD later in the year.



***Guardians* was the fly-away success of 2014.**

The animation won't be a part of the MCU, although it will be inspired by its look.



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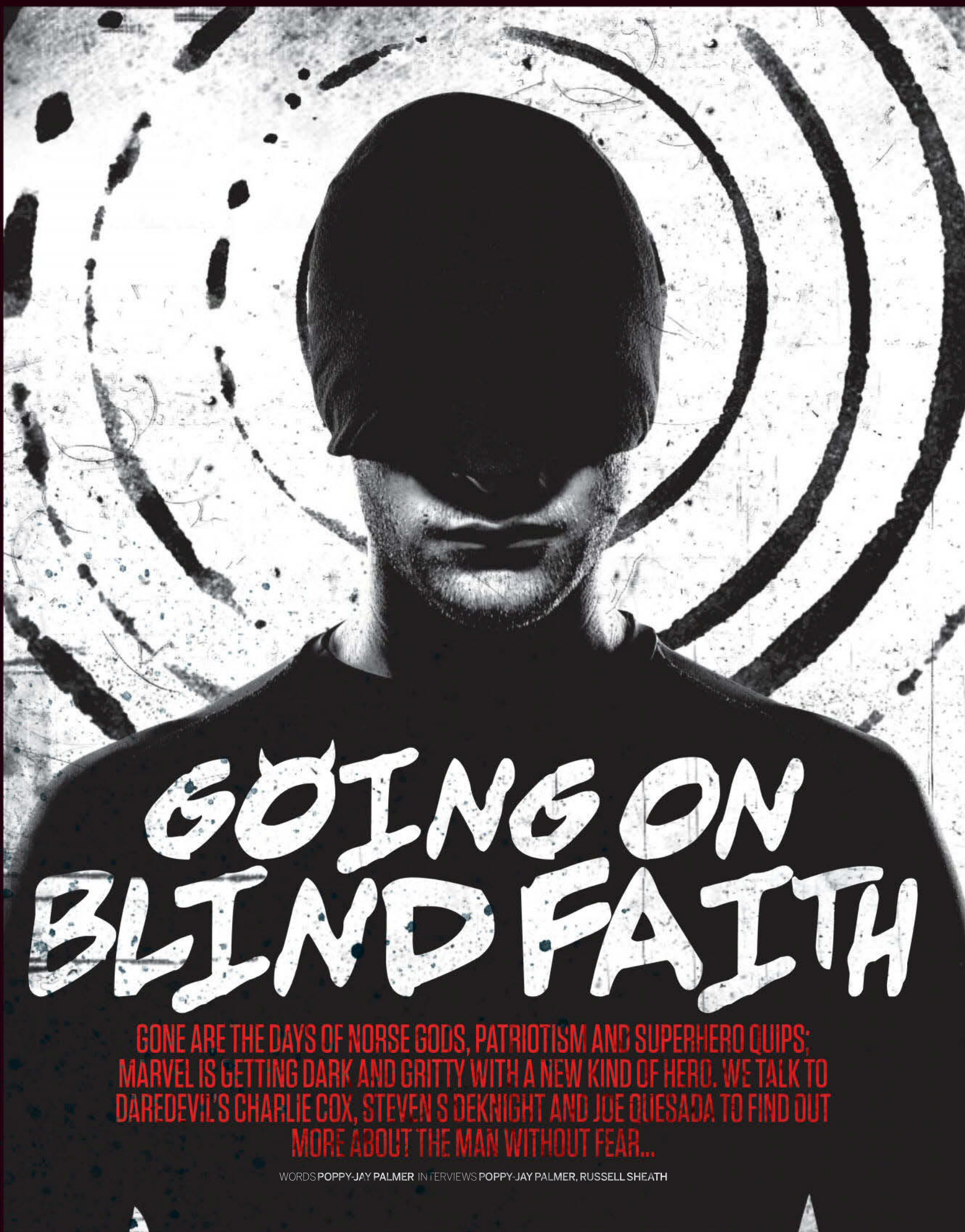
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GOING ON BLIND FAITH

GONE ARE THE DAYS OF NORSE GODS, PATRIOTISM AND SUPERHERO QUIPS; MARVEL IS GETTING DARK AND GRITTY WITH A NEW KIND OF HERO. WE TALK TO DAREDEVIL'S CHARLIE COX, STEVEN S DEKNIGHT AND JOE QUESADA TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER** INTERVIEWS **POPPY-JAY PALMER, RUSSELL SHEATH**

IT'S PROBABLY FAIR TO SAY THAT THE RECEPTION TO MARK STEVEN JOHNSON'S 2003 DAREDEVIL MOVIE WAS MIXED AT BEST. IF Matt Murdock was at all on the radars of comic-book movie fans before, he certainly isn't now. However, he's likely to make a comeback after fans get a load of his new Netflix series. So far, Marvel Cinematic Universe stories have been fun and colourful family entertainment. It looks like that's about to change, however, as Drew Goddard and Steven S DeKnight are taking Marvel to a new level. *Daredevil* may be on a smaller scale to the superhero romps that have come before it – from the big screen to the internet, and from saving the world to Hell's Kitchen – but it's also completely new, and a whole lot darker. We're talking human trafficking, bare-knuckle fighting, child-kidnapping kind of darker. The red Netflix stamp meant that *Daredevil* could be tailored towards a more grown-up audience, so you can expect a suitable level of blood, guts and adult themes.

"I think it suits this character very well," says Charlie Cox, the show's star. "From the comics that I've read, I've found *Daredevil* works best when it's geared towards a slightly older audience. It's not like *Avengers*, where you're trying to save the universe or you're trying to save the world. You're trying to save your street or your city. It's street-level crime you're dealing with. Daredevil walks into a building to confront some Russian human traffickers, and he has to bear in mind the fact that he doesn't have any superpowers. He could easily get knifed or killed or shot, and in order for the stakes to feel that high, we need it to be darker and to feel tonally more adult.

"The way we've been describing it is as a crime drama with superhero elements. Because he doesn't have superpowers, you're able to ground it more in reality, and for me that's very exciting. That's the kind of stuff I would respond to... There's a strong chance, based on how sophisticated the writing is, that you will not have to be any sort of Marvel fan or superhero fan or comic-book fan in any way to enjoy this show."

Though Drew Goddard occupies the 'created by' title card, he had to drop out part way through to work on *Sinister Six*, but he still acts as executive producer and consultant. Replacing him as showrunner was Steven S DeKnight. As someone with a CV that includes shows like *Buffy*, *Angel*, *Smallville* and *Spartacus*, DeKnight's inclusion seems perfect. He also happens to be a life-long *Daredevil* fan, and his enthusiasm for the character is evident. His wish list for the show is probably more or less the same as that of regular fans.

"Half joking, half seriously, I always thought about Stilt Man," he tells us. "Obviously, it's very difficult to do in a grounded reality, but there are so many characters I love. I was thrilled to find out that they are concentrating on Wilson Fisk and to explore that character and his psychology and how he becomes the Kingpin of Crime. That's a story I was dying to tell.

Speaking of Fisk, the pick choice of Vincent D'Onofrio represents the numerous great casting choices on the show. In addition, there's *True Blood*'s ▷



Charlie Cox takes to the streets as Matt Murdock, aka Daredevil.



Vincent D'Onofrio as the Kingpin himself, Wilson Fisk.







> THE FRANK MILLER AND LATER THE BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS RUNS ARE OUR SPIRITUAL GUIDE
> STEVEN DEKNIGHT

Deborah Ann Woll as probable love interest Karen Page, *Sin City*'s Rosario Dawson as Claire Temple (Night Nurse in the comics), and *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay*'s Elden Henson as law partner/stooge Foggy Nelson. With Murdock's supporting cast, there's many directions the show could go in.

"Looking forward, there are so many stories to tell. The Hand, Elektra, Bullseye... with a 13-episode arc you don't have to rush it; you can explore. That's not to say we are going to do Bullseye and Elektra, but it's on the radar. I've been a huge fan of the *Punisher* comics for years. I'd love to see him get his due on a platform like this. Nothing would delight me more than to see the Punisher get his own show and maybe we could convince Marvel to go Hard-R rating. If any character deserves an R rating, it's the Punisher.

"We don't take any particular storyline, but we take our inspiration from the entire run of *Daredevil*, specifically some of the Frank Miller and later the Brian Michael Bendis runs, which really are our spiritual guide."

BACK TO BASICS

Other Marvel characters we'd like to see in Netflix's world

The Punisher

Judging by what we've seen so far, Punisher would make the perfect adversary. Adi Shankar's *Dirty Laundry* proved that with the right direction, Thomas Jane can be the quintessential Frank Castle.

Moon Knight

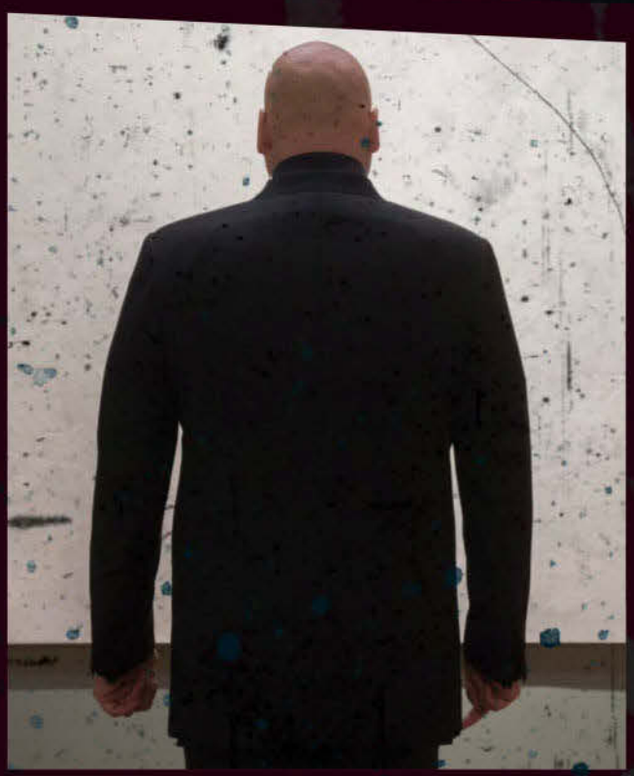
Essentially Bruce Wayne minus the tragic childhood and with added psychological disorders, Marc Spector's life as a costumed crime-fighter seems to take him to far darker places than anything seen before.

Nighthawk

His resemblance to Michael Keaton's Birdman will probably count against him, but as a frequent member of the Defenders in the comics, we wouldn't be surprised to see him show up at some point.

Machine Man

Okay, so he's an intelligent robot whose catchphrase is "My robot brain needs beer". Still, the current Netflix parade doesn't exactly look heavy on comedy, so maybe this could be a much-needed injection.





Joe Quesada alighted on casting Cox after watching him in *Boardwalk Empire*.









GETTING THE CASTING FOR MATT MURDOCK RIGHT WAS AT THE TOP OF THE LIST OF PRIORITIES WHEN THE SHOW WENT INTO development, and DeKnight says the team found what they were looking for in *Stardust* actor Charlie Cox.

"Before the show even came together and Marvel got the rights to *Daredevil* back, Joe Quesada called up Jeph Loeb and said,, 'I've found our Matt Murdock', and that was Charlie Cox, so he was on the radar long before I came in."

Recounting the story, Quesada says, "Long before we had the *Daredevil* rights back from Fox, I was watching *Boardwalk Empire*, and they introduced a new character, Owen Sleater, played by an actor I had never seen before. I was captivated. Here was an actor who went from level-headed liaison for his boss to cold-blooded, psychotic hit man for the IRA, to later romancing the petticoats off a guy's wife within a matter of a few scenes.

"I called Jeph and told him that I had found our Matt Murdock, and his name was Charlie Cox. Jeph laughed and said, 'That's great, but you do know we don't have the rights to *Daredevil*.' I was aware of this, but as Jeph knows, no one at Marvel has ever accused me of being pessimistic. In my gut I just knew we were going to get them back.

"Flash forward, the rights eventually revert back, and I'm at dinner with Jeph and Drew. It's early on in the process, and we're playing 'Fantasy Casting,' batting around names both famous and slightly famous, and somewhere in the middle of the conversation I sheepishly say, 'There's this guy named Charlie Cox,' and everyone at the table says 'Who?' 'He was in *Boardwalk Empire*, he strangled a guy in a bathroom with piano wire.' 'Oh yeah, he's awesome! Let's keep him in mind.'"

"We saw a lot of great actors, and Charlie came in with a brilliant and somewhat odd audition where he played Matt Murdock as introverted, hunched over and talking to himself," says DeKnight. "It wasn't where we wanted to go, but it was such a strong performance that we talked to Charlie about the character, and told him some more about what we were looking for. Charlie came back in and completely changed his performance, and it was just as brilliant. What I loved about Charlie is that he has a pathos to him. You could see the pain he was portraying just under the surface, but above and beyond all that, he's just a really great guy, which is something you can often overlook when you are casing your lead. All those things combined made him our choice."

Cox had to do quite a lot of preparation to play Murdock. Not being a huge guy to start with, he had to bulk up a fair bit, and admits to never owning a gym membership before filming. But with a role like Murdock, there's more to it on a physical level than showing up on set with more muscles. As Murdock is blind, Cox had to work at practicing not being able to see.

"That's been really tricky, actually. I worked with a blind consultant who's been blind for 20 years, and most of that was kind of observational, and also kind of technique, blind technique. But when Matt Murdock is walking down the street or when he's with people, he has to maintain this illusion that he's a regular blind man... When he's alone or with people who know about him, he can forget that. He can operate as a regular human being. He would never bump into anything, or he would never need to find a glass with his hands, because he has a 360-degree image of the world he's forming in his mind with his senses.



What we've seen so far draws on the darkest – and best – storylines from the comics.



Matt Murdock alongside law firm partner Foggy Nelson (Elden Henson).



The 'training costume' is drawn straight from *The Man Without Fear* miniseries.



Probable love interest Karen Page is played by Deborah Ann Woll.

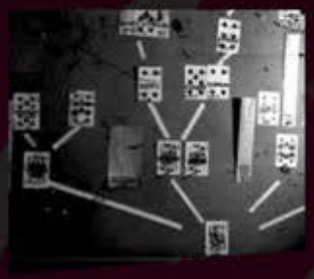
"Having said that, the hardest aspect was the deadness of the eyes. When he takes his glasses off the eyes don't work, and the reason that's tricky is because when Joe, my blind consultant, would talk to me, he would look at my mouth. He wasn't really focusing on anything. He was just looking in my direction. That's easy to replicate, but on camera it doesn't tell the same story. On camera, it looks like two people are talking. So that was quite difficult. I was worried about that, and became quite obsessed with it.

"I watched *Scent Of A Woman* and different films, and there's different ways of advertising it, but I didn't want to advertise it. I just wanted it to be present. So I went back to the panels in the comics, and of course the reason it works is because you know he's blind. So I went, 'You know what? People know. So as long as I didn't look anyone in the eyes and maintained a kind of deadness to them... I could never pick something up and find it with my eyes.' That was the tricky thing. If he picks something up he just knows."

In addition to being a well-known blind superhero in the Marvel universe, Daredevil is also a well-known Catholic. Luckily for Cox, he didn't have to do as much prep for that aspect, as he was also raised Catholic. He even played a priest in the 2011 film *There Be Dragons*, and went to live with monks for a while, touring Spain and Italy and taking mass a few times.

"My faith goes in and out, I guess. I don't go to church every Sunday or anything like that, but I do identify quite strongly with aspects of my faith and religious upbringing. So that was helpful. There's a scene in the church where Daredevil walks in and sits down, and it was a natural instinct to make the sign of the cross and genuflect before I sat down, because I knew about that. That's one of those things that I luckily just knew. That was one of the few things I got for free on this job!"

When Daredevil isn't being a blind crime-fighting extraordinaire, he's in an office block being A lawyer. Of course, the whole 'dishing out justice' thing often blurs the line between Murdock being a protector of the innocent and Murdock being another trouble-causing thug. The phrase 'justice is blind' plays a big part in the series. Cox thinks Murdock's background in law makes for an interesting narrative.







"IT'S A WONDERFUL DEVICE, AND ANOTHER REASON WHY I THINK THE CHARACTER WORKS WELL ON TELEVISION, BECAUSE YOU HAVE longer to explore these inner conflicts," he tells us. "He's a lawyer by day but he's donning a mask and going out and beating people up at night, so he essentially believes in justice and the law and the whole system, and yet he's not paying respect to it in many ways. Plus, you've got the fact that he's a Catholic and he's grown up in a deeply religious household, so he presumably believes in God and God's will, and he's playing God in some ways... Part of the story of this first season is how he reconciles who he is, what he believes is right and what he believes is just, and how he believes the world should operate, and what his drive is and what his needs are. I think he becomes very torn by those things."

On the question of whether Daredevil is actually a superhero or a criminal with good intentions, Cox is torn himself.

"You have to see him as a superhero, but it depends on what you define a superhero to be," he says. "It's interesting, because the term 'alter ego' is kind of dodgy. I mean, technically Daredevil is Matt Murdock's alter ego. It's almost like initially he just changes costume. He just changes what he's wearing. But something happens to him psychically when he does that. In our show, it's almost like he's a bit of an addict. When he puts the costume on his intentions are good. But it's almost like all bets are off. He can't guarantee what he's going to do. He can't guarantee when he's going to get home.



"YOU HAVE TO SEE HIM AS A SUPERHERO, BUT IT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU DEFINE A SUPERHERO TO BE"
CHARLIE COX





"Steven DeKnight said that Daredevil is one bad day away from being the Punisher. I thought that was really helpful. Again, it adds to the dark tone, and I think it's more interesting to watch. Personally, I'm not a huge Superman fan. I know he's a huge character and Henry Cavill did a wonderful job [in *Man Of Steel*], but I'm not a huge fan, because Superman is so good. He's so earnest and, for me, it's not always interesting. It's like, 'This is wrong and I'm right, I'm going to do the right thing'. I like these elements where you question it, and he questions it. You know, is he taking this too far?"

After a couple of gut-busting trailers and eye-catching posters, there's still a question on most of our minds: where's the suit? So far, we've only seen Daredevil in a little black number reminiscent of the Man in Black from *The Princess Bride*, but Cox promises the suit is going to make an appearance eventually, and it's going to be good.

"You can't imagine the amount of work and planning that goes into these things. I mean, it is *so* important and expensive. What was great for the show is that Marvel spent the money on it. They did the same thing for the show that they do for the movie costumes, so they really went there. I saw some designs of the earlier stuff, and what I can tell you is that it's a really great hybrid of the classic, what people want, what they want to see, what they desire and need and what is in people's minds as the Daredevil costume, functionality, and why it is the way it is, certain aspects to it for particular reasons.

"The thing I enjoyed most about the show is that there's a really great storyline that builds up. For me, I really love that. Some people don't. I've spoken to some fans that don't care about that. They want it to be 'it' because it's 'it'. But I really enjoyed the reasoning behind it. Why is there a suit? Why is it the colour it is? Why are these elements attached? What the writers did I thought was brilliant."

Daredevil will be available to stream on Netflix from 10 April.



HERO FOR HIRE

Luke Cage actor Mike Colter on Daredevil, AKA Jessica Jones, superpowers and more

How does it feel to be the face of Luke Cage?
Marvel is something that I can really anticipate. I've always dreamed about playing a superhero, no particular superhero specifically, but to get something like this is really a gift. So I look at it as an opportunity that I hope continues, and I really love the Luke Cage character and all the scripts that I've been looking at, so I'm excited about it. I'm excited about what it means, and hopefully the fans will like what we're doing and it will carry on for a bit.

What did you think of the scripts?
Obviously I can't go into detail about them, but I could tell you that they are dark and edgy and gritty, and they revolve around characters that live in New York City. I really like what I'm seeing. It's geared towards more of an adult audience, and it's different to the Marvel Cinematic Universe that you see in the big pictures, because this is more refined and focused on [the city]. I feel like people who watch it will be able to enjoy it in a different way than they did with the other stuff in the movies. I look forward to seeing how people take this new creation that Marvel's good at.

How do you feel about the casting of Charlie Cox and Krysten Ritter as Daredevil and Jessica Jones?
I'm working on *AKA Jessica Jones* with Krysten now, that's where Luke Cage first appears. I haven't worked with Charlie, but it's one of those things where I saw the casting and just… I'm a fan of his from *Boardwalk Empire*. I really liked him in *Boardwalk*, so I thought it was really good casting there, and I've been a big fan of Krysten for a while. I was obsessed with her for the role over a couple of other actresses… There was something very right about her as Jessica Jones. She brings the comic-books to life. I thought she brought something that I couldn't quite put my finger on, but it was something very unique. We went through a gruelling testing with Marvel, so I got to work with her prior to starting the shoot. She's lovely, and I'm really happy for her. I think she's going to nail it and do great things with it.

Are you a fan of the superhero sub-genre?
Yeah! I think most people secretly wish they had some kind of superpower. You couldn't be an all-competent superhero, but you'd have one power, and everyone would love to have that one power. Just one thing you could do, whatever that thing would be: flying, strength, speed, X-ray vision, something. I think everybody has at some point indulged themselves with that thought, especially as a child. Adults grow up because we have to, but I don't think we ever lose that moment of fantasy that makes us feel like we could do something that's otherworldly and something that's special. It's really unique when you get people to create a character that you get to step into and live out, and with the help of special effects and some wonderful camera work, you get to do the things that you only thought you could do in your mind. It's great. It's real fun.

So what would be your power?
I always wanted to be able to transport myself from one place to another. It would be really great, because I would save all the frequent flyer miles and I would have to be on a plane. It would be lovely. The only problem is I wouldn't be able to transport my luggage. I'd have to buy more stuff every time I transport. The clothes don't come with you. You have to start again from scratch. But teleportation would be great.

You'd have to layer up all your clothes before you teleported.
No, I don't think you'd be able to teleport them! You'd have to pop over naked! That's the downside – you'd have to come naked. You'd have to be very specific about where you teleport.

You could get a super-suit that would go with you.
No, I think teleporting naked would be better. It's more fun that way. You'd have to figure out how to get your clothes and find a wallet. It's going to make it much more fun!

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HEROES OF HELL'S KITCHEN

WORDS: JONATHAN HATFULL

10 COMICS YOU REALLY NEED TO READ BEFORE NETFLIX'S NEW SHOWS START

1 DAREDEVIL #7

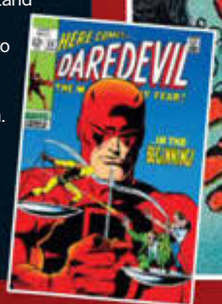
Published: April 1965 **Writer:** Stan Lee **Plot/Pencils:** Wally Wood **Inks/Colours:** Wally Wood **Letters:** Artis Simek **Cover:** Wally Wood

Daredevil's early days are often overlooked, as Hell's Kitchen's guardian had a freewheelin' spirit more in common with Peter Parker than the tortured soul he would become. However, this early instalment showed the character's potential and the impact he could have as an ordinary man standing up for what's right. As Namor wreaks havoc in New York, Matt Murdock takes a beating, but keeps getting back up. His resilience earns the respect of his foe, and showed readers that this was a hero who would never back down.

2 DAREDEVIL #53-71

Published: June 1969 - December 1970 **Writers:** Roy Thomas, Roy Thomas Gary Friedrich (#67) **Plot/Pencils:** Gene Colan **Inks/Colours:** George Klein (#53-54), Syd Shores (#55) **Letters:** Artie Simek, Sam Rosen (#58, #60-63) **Cover:** Gene Colan, Marie Severin, Joe Sinnott (#61), Marie Severin (#62-68, 70-71), Severin, Bill Everett, Sam Rosen (#67), Sal Buscema (#69)

Any list of Daredevil stories would be incomplete without the incredible run of Roy Thomas and Gene Colan. Colan in particular defined the character's look and environment, while creating some striking signature flourishes (his takes on Matt's radar vision stand out). As a duo, they began his journey into the gritty grey areas Frank Miller would embrace and darken. If you think Miller made Murdock's life tough, check out Thomas and Colan's run to see how he got there.





3 DAREDEVIL #227-233 'BORN AGAIN'

Published: February 1986 - August 1986 **Writer:** Frank Miller **Pencils:** David Mazzucchelli **Inks:** David Mazzucchelli **Colours:** Christie Scheele, Max Scheele (230) **Letters:** Joe Rosen **Cover:** David Mazzucchelli

Frank Miller took Matt on an ever-darkening journey that reached its pitch-black apex with this seminal run. Matt's former love interest Karen Page reappears as an ex-porn star with a heroin habit who sells out her ex's secret identity for a fix. Murdock is sent on a downward spiral as the Kingpin starts to take his life apart piece by piece. He's disbarred, becomes homeless, and is firmly beaten by his nemesis. It takes a rescue from his long-lost mother to get his life back on track and give the arc its strong Catholic redemption angle. Although it ends on a positive note, *Born Again* shows just how far Miller was willing to go, and the confidence Marvel had in letting him.

















"I think one of the main factors [of his popularity] is that he's a character that struggles in adversity. It's a guy who doesn't really have any cosmic powers, to a degree. He faces overwhelming odds, but he persists"
David Mack, Daredevil (artist/writer) and Daredevil: End Of Days (artist)



4 DAREDEVIL #254-257 & #259-263 'TYPHOID MARY'

Published: May 1988 **Writer:** Ann Nocenti **Pencils:** John Romita Jr **Inks:** Al Williamson **Colours:** Max Scheele, Janet Jackson (#259), Gregory Wright (#261) **Letters:** Joe Rosen **Cover:** John Romita Jr, Al Williamson

Whoever took over from Frank Miller was going to face an impossible task, and Ann Nocenti knew that. What she did was write her Daredevil the way that she wanted, assuming that nobody would like it and she would get fired. Instead, she revitalised the character by introducing her strong social conscience and anti-Reagan sentiments and took the series in a more fantastical direction.

Together with a consistently on-form John Romita Jr, Nocenti took an impossible task and created something special. It's tough to pick an essential read from their run, but we'd go with the first Typhoid Mary arc as both an introduction to a great villain and a good example of Nocenti's in-your-face political writing. Or you could try #278, the start of a run in which Matt literally goes to hell.







5 DAREDEVIL: THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR #1-5

Published: October 1993 - February 1994 **Writer:** Frank Miller **Pencils:** John Romita Jr **Inks:** Al Williamson **Colours:** Christie Scheele **Letters:** Joe Rosen **Cover:** John Romita Jr, Al Williamson

Having redefined the character of Daredevil during his run, Frank Miller altered his origin too with this retelling of how Matt went from a kid on Hell's Kitchen to a costumed vigilante with martial arts training and a lot of Catholic guilt.

There is plenty of trademark Miller here, from the grim grittiness of his attempts to take revenge for his father's death to his ninja training with his mentor Stick. It also told the story of how Matt met Elektra and the origins of their complicated relationship, it features some prime Kingpin villainy, and boasts some incredible artwork from the iconic John Romita Jr.

Published in 1993, it's pretty much acknowledged as the definitive Daredevil origin story.

Drawing the devil
Ol' Horn-head's top 5 artists



Gene Colan
The definitive Daredevil artist, he created more than 80 issues. From grit to soaring adventure, he set the bar.



John Romita Jr
Romita Jr delivered some of his best work, taking Daredevil from the rain-drenched streets of NYC to Hell itself.



Bill Sienkiewicz
Sienkiewicz's bold flourishes never stray from the spirit of the characters he portrays. Just look at his Elektra.



David Mack
Brought a painterly beauty to his DD covers and work on *Alias*, and a Dave McKean-esque eye for textured detail.



Alex Maleev
His Daredevil is bold, fierce and strong, a man alone against the city, ready for a fight.



6 DAREDEVIL #32-40 & #46-50 'OUT/HARDCORE'

Published: June 2002 - October 2003 **Writer:** Brian Michael Bendis **Pencils:** Alex Maleev, Manuel Gutierrez (#38-39), Terry Dodson (#40) **Inks:** Alex Maleev, Manuel Gutierrez (#38-39), Rachel Dodson (#40) **Colours:** Matt Hollingsworth **Letters:** Richard Starkings, Comicraft, Corey Petit (#47-50) **Cover:** Alex Maleev

Brian Michael Bendis' run on *Daredevil* reached its zenith with this superb run of stories. When Matt's secret identity is leaked by a police informant, and subsequently by the police themselves, he finds himself under intense media scrutiny.

Bendis is just as interested in the effect this has on our hero's psyche as he is in the potential for violent mayhem, and as 'Out' segues into 'Hardcore', Matt begins to lose his mind a little bit.

There's a clear Frank Miller influence, and Bendis also gets the opportunity to indulge his love of pulp, a combination that is mirrored in Alex Maleev's superb artwork, while the line between champion and villain begins to blur.



7 ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN #1-8

Published: August 1986 - March 1987 **Writer:** Frank Miller **Pencils:** Bill Sienkiewicz **Colours:** Bill Sienkiewicz **Letters:** Jim Novak **Cover:** Bill Sienkiewicz

Elektra is one of the *Daredevil* series' most intriguing figures, and with this 1986 run Frank Miller ensured she'd never stray from her fan-favourite antihero status. It's not difficult to see why it was deemed unsuitable for younger readers, as it's packed with plenty of Miller's trademarks (political satire, ninjas, darkness), stunning Sienkiewicz artwork, and pretty shocking violence – thrilling stuff.





READ BEFORE **AKA JESSICA JONES** AIRS

8 ALIAS #1-9 'ALIAS'

Published: November 2001 **Writer:** Brian Michael Bendis **Pencils:** Michael Gaydos **Inks:** Michael Gaydos **Colours:** Matt Hollingsworth **Letters:** Richard Starkings **Cover:** David Mack

If you're only going to read one Jessica Jones comic before Netflix unveils their take on it, make sure it's Brian Michael Bendis and Michael Gaydos' *Alias* run. It sets its stall out as an adult comic early on, as Bendis grounded the character of Jessica Jones while she sheds her superhero status to start her own private detective agency. The writer is at the top of his game here as he gives the character a complex, difficult personal life that pulls the reader in, much as he'd begun to do with his *Daredevil* run, while Gaydos blends noir and cop drama with sudden bursts of widescreen heroism. She takes on the kind of cases that the big heroes will never know about, and *Alias* doesn't condescend to its readers by assuring them that everything will be okay.



READ BEFORE **LUKE CAGE** AIRS

9 NEW AVENGERS #1-6 'BREAKOUT'

Published: January 2005 - June 2005 **Writer:** Brian Michael Bendis **Pencils:** David Finch **Inks:** Danny Miki, Mark Morales, Victor Olazaba **Colours:** Frank D'Amata **Letters:** Richard Starkings, Frank D'Amata, Albert Deschene **Cover:** David Finch, Danny Miki, Frank D'Amata

Created in 1972 with his own comic *Hero For Hire*, Luke Cage has evolved from a response to exploitation movie heroes into a responsible guardian. He's flourished in solo stories (*Luke Cage Noir* is particularly good), and given bigger arcs like *House Of M* and *Civil War* added depth. He was a big part of what made *Alias* so special, but we're going to pick *New Avengers* as the best place to begin. Brian Michael Bendis and David Finch gave the group a fresh start in the 'Breakout' storyline, which begins with Matt Murdock, Foggy Nelson and Cage stranded in a maximum-security prison during a power cut, and ends with the new team of Cage, Captain America, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Spider-Woman, Wolverine and Sentry.



READ BEFORE **IRON FIST** AIRS

10 THE IMMORTAL IRON FIST #1-6 'THE LAST IRON FIST STORY'

Published: January 2007 **Writers:** Ed Brubaker, Matt Fraction **Pencils:** David Aja, Travel Foreman **Colours:** Matt Hollingsworth **Letters:** Dave Lanphear **Cover:** David Aja

In the same way that Luke Cage took inspiration from John Shaft, Daniel Rand's Iron Fist drew on kung-fu movies. Raised by the citizens of K'un L'un, a mystical city, after his parents are killed attempting to find it, Daniel is trained in martial arts before returning to New York to find vengeance and purpose. He found his greatest success teaming up with Luke Cage as Heroes For Hire, and posed as Daredevil while working to protect the identity of Matt Murdock. He got his most acclaimed storyline courtesy of Ed Brubaker, Matt Fraction and David Aja with *Immortal Iron Fist*. These issues see Brubaker and Fraction combining their interests to create something heartfelt and fantastical, with real emotional resonance.



"I think with Daredevil you can cross a number of lines with him. You can cross the superhero line, but there's also a tragic aspect to him as well, and it's got elements of noir. So I think he kind of runs the gamut, much more than other characters. He's a very layered, nuanced character, that a lot of the others who are very much out there with their powers and issues. Matt's got a boatload of subconscious stuff going on"

Bill Sienkiewicz, Daredevil: Love & War (artist) and Elektra: Assassin (artist)

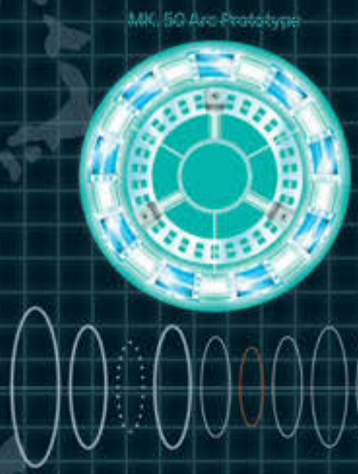


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** URGENT From: Edward Gross

Marvel are only just getting started. With Age Of Ultron within reach and a road towards Infinity War that includes Spider-Man, Black Panther and more, the MCU is going supernova. Mastermind Joss Whedon and stars Mark Ruffalo, Aaron Taylor-Johnson and James Spader discuss laying the groundwork for many more years of Marvel movies...



Avengers: Age Of Ultron is going to one of the cinematic events of the year, bringing together the stars of some of the biggest movies of the last few years. Yet even in light of this, you sense that the best is yet to come. Post-*Age Of Ultron*, there will be *Captain America: Civil War*, *Thor: Ragnarok* and *Guardians Of The Galaxy 2*, as well as solo outings for Ant-Man, Doctor Strange, Black Panther and Captain Marvel, with all paths leading to two-part monolith *Avengers: Infinity War*.

The biggest story of all, however, involves a red-and-blue lycra-clad superhuman going by the name of Spider-Man. With Marvel Studios and Sony having come to an agreement for the wall-crawler to appear in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (albeit still owned by his parent studio), you sense that Marvel will stop at nothing in their bid to make this universe as big as possible.

The interconnectivity of the MCU offers challenges to filmmakers working within it who must take into account what has come before and where things are going. That's especially true for Joss Whedon, whose *Avengers* films have numerous solo adventures feeding in and out of them.

"The trick of these things," Whedon concurs, "is to always make the film respect everything that has happened in the other films, but also not assuming that everybody is going to have seen them. Tony Stark obviously has the events of *Iron Man 3* that have taken place. Tony is very much in the game, but at the same time he is spending a lot of time in the lab trying to figure out a way to change

Continued

the game, basically. It's not enough to put on a suit and punch people; he is definitely thinking big picture. He wants answers as much as he wants to beat the next guy.

"The events of *Winter Soldier* also affect us enormously," he adds in regards to *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*, "because they affect SHIELD, and SHIELD is a part of the *Avengers* universe. They are working under a new paradigm where there isn't an all-powerful organisation watching over them. They are also working under a new paradigm because of the events of the television shows. *Agents Of SHIELD* has shown that there has been fallout from the first *Avengers* movie and that people of powers are cropping up. There is a whole slate of television shows that are going to reiterate that point, so it is a new universe. It's a little more volatile; it's a little bit Wild West for superheroes right now. Everybody in the world knows that there are Avengers, superheroes and villains and all kinds of crazy stuff."

All of which promises to feed into future Marvel efforts. For instance, there seems to be little doubt that events in *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* will impact on 2016's *Captain America: Civil War*, and the conflict that will arise between Chris Evans' Captain America and Robert Downey Jr's Iron Man (with a rumoured appearance by Spider-Man somewhere in there as well). Whedon gets the chance to explore the dynamics between the two of them a little more closely in this film.

"Cap and Tony start off fairly harmonious, because they respect each other's place," says Whedon. "Cap runs the team, Tony finances

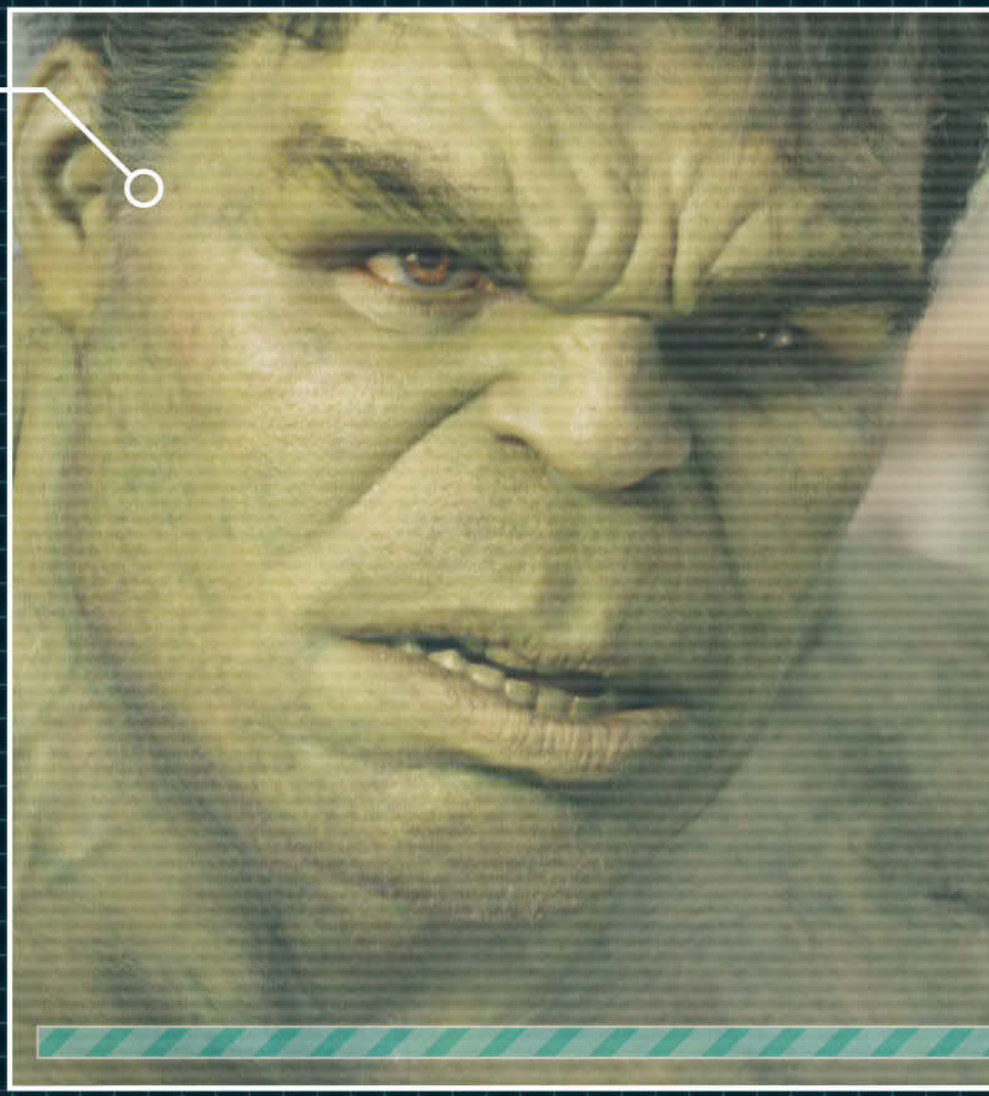




Personal note

Tony... whatever you do, don't forget to pick up an anniversary present for Pepper

Possible ideas
- *Roses*
- *Lamborghini*
- *Another giant bunny..*



He's always angry, but Widow seems to calm him.

Continued

and designs everything, and they both have their own stuff going on as well. But their alliance, which is based on the idea that they recognise their differences and their different skill sets, is going to be put to the test seconds in, and it's going to be Tony who does it. Literally the first word out of Cap's mouth is admonishing Tony. It's who they are, and it's fun to watch those guys go head to head, because they are so different."

Also different is the element that new additions Quicksilver (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) and Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen) are bringing to the mix. As noted at the end of *Winter Soldier*, the twins are ushering in the age of miracles, an age that will flourish in 2016's *Doctor Strange*, which will star Benedict Cumberbatch as Marvel's master of the mystic arts. It is, however, *Age Of Ultron* that will plant the seeds for that mysticism.

"They have powers that are very new," Whedon points out, "and it's exciting for me as a filmmaker, because they are very visual. Scarlet Witch's manipulation of objects, her manipulation of people's thoughts and Quicksilver's super speed are not things we have seen before in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. So I get to play in a new way that will really make the scenes more visceral and exciting, but it's also a sea-change for the Avengers themselves, because no matter what they have been facing, usually it comes down to punching the other guy, and suddenly they are dealing with powers that seem mad to them – except to Thor, because on Asgard stuff like that happens all the time."

One element whose long-range impact is still to be determined is Ultron itself, a sentient robotic threat to humanity as a whole, and something whose impact on the Avengers themselves is life-altering.

James Spader, who provides the voice and motion-capture performance for Ultron, believes that the robot probably views Tony Stark as the absolute defining personification of what's wrong with the world. "The Avengers as a whole he looks upon as being reflective of the decline of civilisation, and all the more so that Tony Stark is responsible for his being to a degree. Very quickly, Ultron becomes a self-created being as he continues to advance and develop and evolve and so on. But in a funny way for other characters introduced in this film, Tony Stark represents a catalyst to the problem.

"When Joss came over to my apartment in New York," he continues, "we sat on the roof and drank a bottle of wine and talked for several hours. He was excited about the eccentricities and idiosyncrasies of this character, not just what's intimidating or the aggression of this character, but also his insecurities and problems, of which there are many. That's what fascinated Joss and that's what fascinated me."

It intrigued actor Mark Ruffalo as well. Reprising his dual role of Bruce Banner and the Hulk, it is Banner (to a much lesser degree) and Stark that are responsible for the creation of Ultron, and therefore everything that happens.

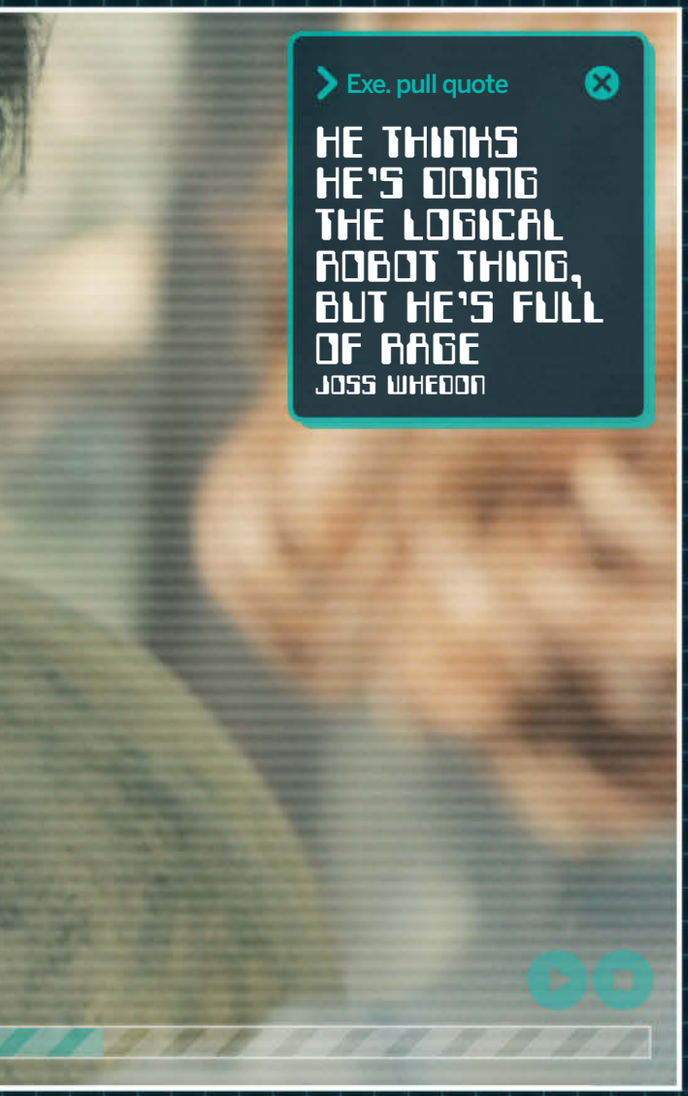
"In the movie," explains Ruffalo, "Banner and Stark team up to create a peacekeeper force for all of humankind, but their experiment goes disastrously awry. It was a big leap to go where they do, because they are basically creating life; that's where these guys have finally come to. They're fooling around in the realm of the gods now, and human beings don't do very well when they enter that sacred space, so they, of course, reap the hubris of such a profound act."

Spader elaborates, "Ultron is able to access anything technological, and anything that is available on the internet has become





It really doesn't look good for our favourite heroes.



Exe. pull quote

HE THINKS HE'S DOING THE LOGICAL ROBOT THING, BUT HE'S FULL OF RAGE
JOSS WHEDON

NEW MAIL FROM: P. PARKER SUBJECT: SUPERHERO REGISTRATION ACT

NEW MAIL FROM: P. POTTS SUBJECT: WAKANDA FLIGHT DETAILS

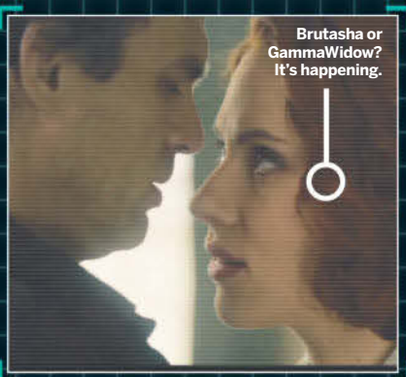
NEW MAIL FROM: M. HILL SUBJECT: *URGENT* DEBRIEF MEETING

NEW MAIL FROM: S. STRANGE SUBJECT: TAROT READING (SPAM)

NEW MAIL FROM: H. PYM SUBJECT: GAIN 3 INCHES IN HOURS (SPAM)

NEW MAIL FROM: GROOT SUBJECT: I AM GROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOT

NEW MAIL FROM: H. DUCK SUBJECT: MEET UP FOR A FRIENDLY DRINK?



Brutasha or GammaWidow? It's happening.



Thor came back to Earth for Jane, not more war.

Continued

part of his stimulation and information and is embedded in his psyche. I think that's inclusive of even conversation. But it's streaming all the time. He has an ungoverned access to it, and it's constantly streaming into whatever processing chip he has in there somewhere. So it's overwhelming and also inconceivable. He has powers and knowledge that are impossible for him to harness, and that mixed with a lot of hubris and psychopathic tendencies are formidable. Troubling. He's too strong for his own good."

Ruffalo says, "What makes this movie work is that we don't know if the Avengers are going to make it. They have a lot going against them, and it's really their shadow that they're fighting against. Ultron is like the negative manifestation of all of their worst attributes."

"Ultron has many fathers," emphasises Whedon, "but ultimately he is the creation of Tony Stark. Stark and Banner worked together to create him, but Banner doesn't really get the credit because it's Tony's obsession and the obsession is to solve the world. He's seen it mess up. He's messed up himself so many times and he's gotten to a higher ambition than he had before, which is just to make it better. He saw the alien army and was not okay with that. He spent most of *Iron Man 3* having anxiety attacks about it, and so he's got this obsession, which is to create a perfect peace. He believes that with Loki's sceptre and the tech that is encapsulated inside – this 'magical' gem – that he can build that."

At that same time, he concedes, there is no such thing as a perfect peace, and for that and other reasons Ultron has a cognitive dissonance that spins him to the point where he's "bonkers."

Whedon muses, "He also becomes self-aware and sentient and knows everything all at once, and is privy to the internet, which means he is into everything and everybody's ideas and everybody's conflicts and everybody's goddamn kittens. His so-called mission is to bring peace, but his way of doing it is to get rid of the status quo and maybe


Following in the footsteps of Evan Peters, Aaron Taylor-Johnson has a lot to live up to.

Continued

everybody else, because humanity is full of conflict. That's just part of what we are.

"The idea is that the way to protect man is to control or even destroy man," he continues. "At the same time, what I like about Ultron is that what's also going on is that he has enormous issues about daddy and about the team, and the Avengers, who are in a way responsible for him. He thinks he's doing the logical robot thing, but he's full of rage and he doesn't even know that. He's not particularly sure what his plan is. He goes from thing to thing. He knows what he wants to do, but at the same time he doesn't really know why he wants to do it. He doesn't know he's the biggest threat humanity ever faced."

And *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* is promising to be the biggest success yet in the annals of the Marvel Cinematic Universe; a potential victory that, in many ways, Ruffalo lies at the feet of Whedon. "It's deceptive, because what Joss loves and what he knows is serious literature and serious playwrights and serious pieces of work," he opines. "Those are his reference points, so as a writer he's constructing something that's incredibly complex, and doing it in a way that makes us feel like we don't know why it's working so well. He is telling big stories that have grand themes, but doing it in a way that is culturally acceptable to everybody – which is, in itself, a huge feat. With Joss it starts with the writing, and the fact that each character has their moment is a tip of the hat to him. He knows the story and the characters so well that he knows when those two things should and must intersect, so that you get the perfect balance of character. You feel like you're being satisfied about who these people are, while at the same time pushing the story forward."

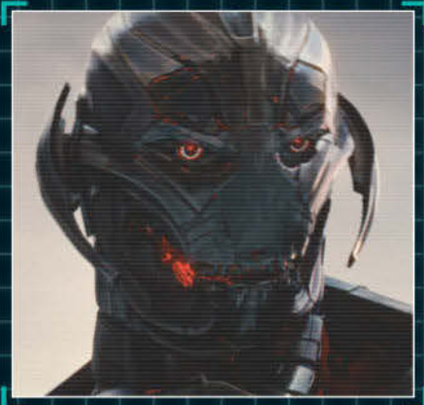
Adds Taylor-Johnson, "Joss is the ultimate Avenger, essentially. He's the team leader. He can see behind everyone's eyes. I'd like to see him when he's writing, just being like some schizophrenic man and talking to himself in five or six different kinds of characters. I rely on him and put all my trust in him. He's open to talk about everything, our thoughts and ideas. He's brilliant."

"On the set," Spader states, "Joss distils this tremendous sense of the whole to just the tiniest things and that is to me perfect in terms of the relationship between the director and actor. He's very specific and very often looking at the smallest element that affects the whole in a dramatic fashion."

For his part, Whedon has his own expectations: "What was so grand about this weird, disparate group coming together is that we know that nothing lasts forever, and that there is a dark side to everything. It's going to be a little more grown-up than the first one. A little scarier. A little funkier. But in the end, it's got the same values; it's got the same extraordinary characters and a lot of humour. And yes, there may be some punching."

Avengers: Age Of Ultron will be released in UK cinemas on 23 April.


Amid the fighting will no doubt be lots of smashing.




I spy with my little eye, something beginning with 'V'.



Quicksilver memo

RUNNER RUNNER

AARON TAYLOR-JOHNSON ON QUICKSILVER

Aaron Taylor-Johnson (*Kick-Ass*, *Godzilla*) describes Quicksilver's role in *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* as follows: "It continues on from where it left off at the end of *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, where we did a little tag where Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch were basically experiments in HYDRA's basement. They're out to seek revenge on Tony Stark due to what they've been through in the past. They're Eastern European and in a place called Sokovia. They lost their parents. They're very angry, and putting their anger towards Tony Stark. These two survived the experiments that HYDRA was doing and became enhanced. My character has super speed and Elizabeth Olsen, who plays Quicksilver's sister, Scarlet Witch, has psychological powers.

"He's quick-tempered and becomes frustrated with everything because due to his super speed, he's already there," the actor continues. "Everything moves too slowly for him. It's been fun to play with this character and, more importantly, discover who he is. Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch only have one another. It's just them against the world and they can't do without each other, which is nice. This is also a yin and yang thing. I'm very fatherly and physical and protective over her, and she's sort of that motherly nurturing and caring and more emotional and thoughtful person. They balance each other out. You couldn't really have Quicksilver without Scarlet Witch."

NEW RECRUITS?

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES THEY MAY BE, BUT THE CURRENT CROP OF AVENGERS CAN'T GO ON FOREVER. WE LOOK AT THE CANDIDATES TO STEP INTO THEIR MASSIVE SHOES...



SPIDER-MAN

Confirmed for Phase 3, anything less than a starring role is unlikely. The question is whether it'll be Peter Parker or Miles Morales.



FALCON

Captain America's sidekick (and successor) in the comics, his casting in *Ultron* points to a potentially bigger role later on.



WAR MACHINE

Rhodey was prominent in the promos for *Age Of Ultron*. In the absence of any future *Iron Man* movies, this may be his moment.



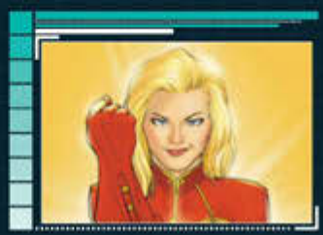
BUCKY

In the comics he overcomes his brainwashing and becomes an Avenger, even taking on the role of Cap or 'Bucky Cap', to Spidey.



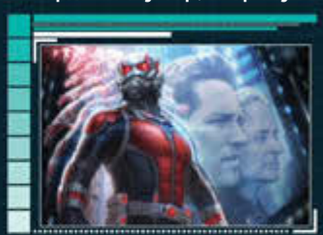
BLACK PANTHER

Confirmed for a role in *Captain America: Civil War*, it is likely that *Infinity War* will be T'Challa, King of Wakanda's time to shine.



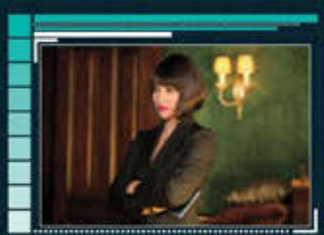
CAPTAIN MARVEL

With the superheroine's own movie being released in time for *Infinity War*, we're expecting her to have a big impact on things.



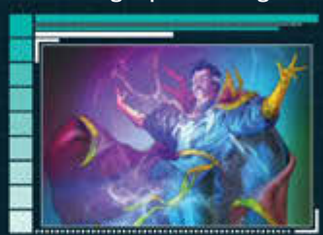
ANT-MAN

The Avengers are full of egotists and superhumans – an everyman is direly needed. No one is more ideal for this than Scott Lang.



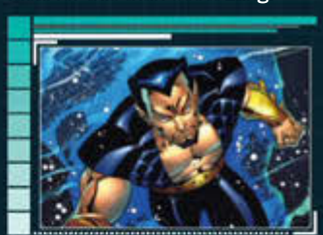
WASP

Looks like it'll be Pym's daughter Hope rather than Janet, but wherever Ant-Man goes, it's hard not to imagine a Wasp far behind.



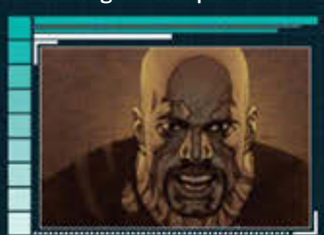
DOCTOR STRANGE

It's only recently that the Sorcerer Supreme became a fixture in the comics. But a mention in *Winter Soldier* puts an eye on him.



NAMOR

An Easter egg from *Iron Man 2* showed an ocean location marked on a map – if that's not a nod to the King of Atlantis then what is?



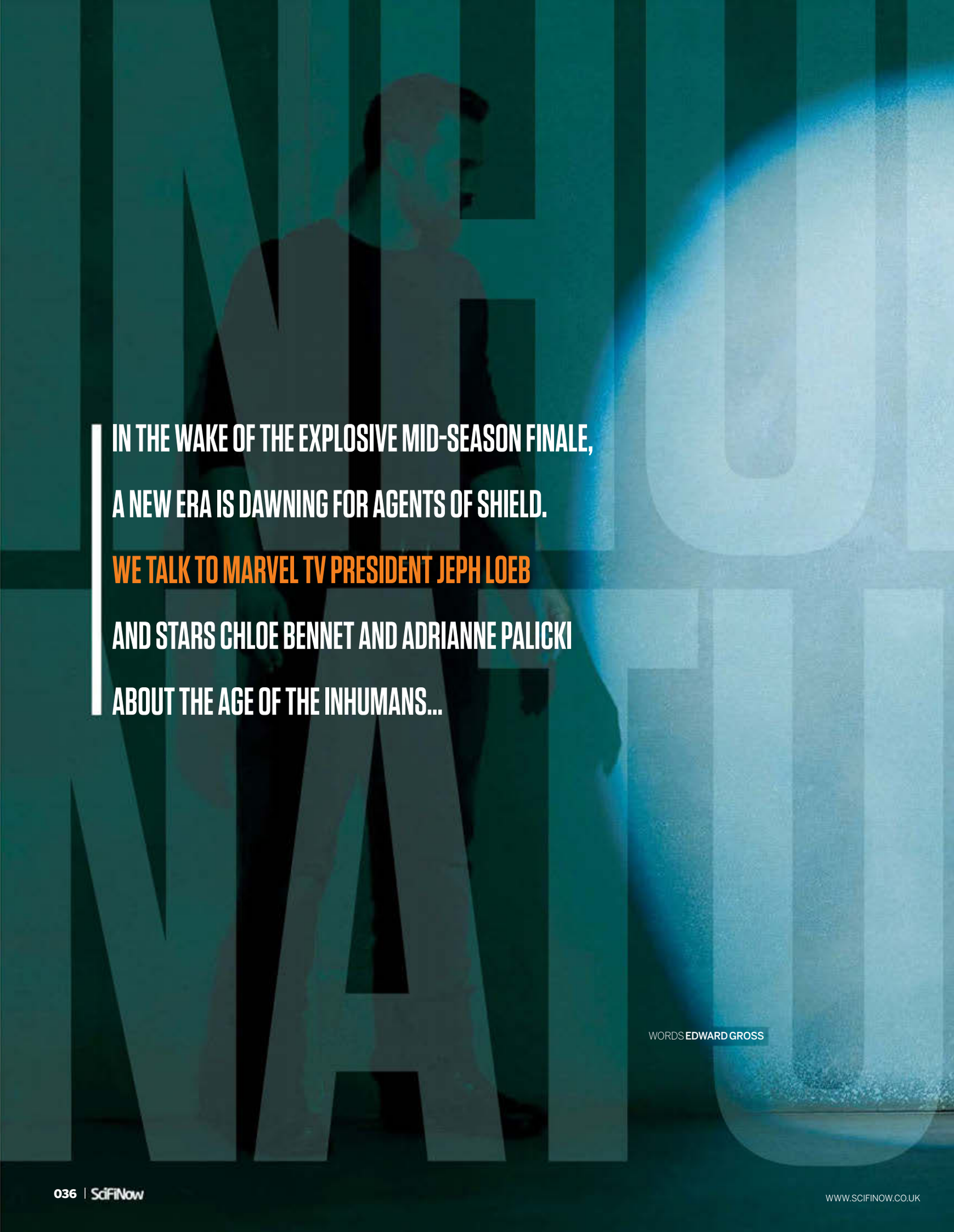
LUKE CAGE

Of the Netflix crop he's the most likely to make the step up, having lead the Avengers in the comics and fulfilling the everyman role.



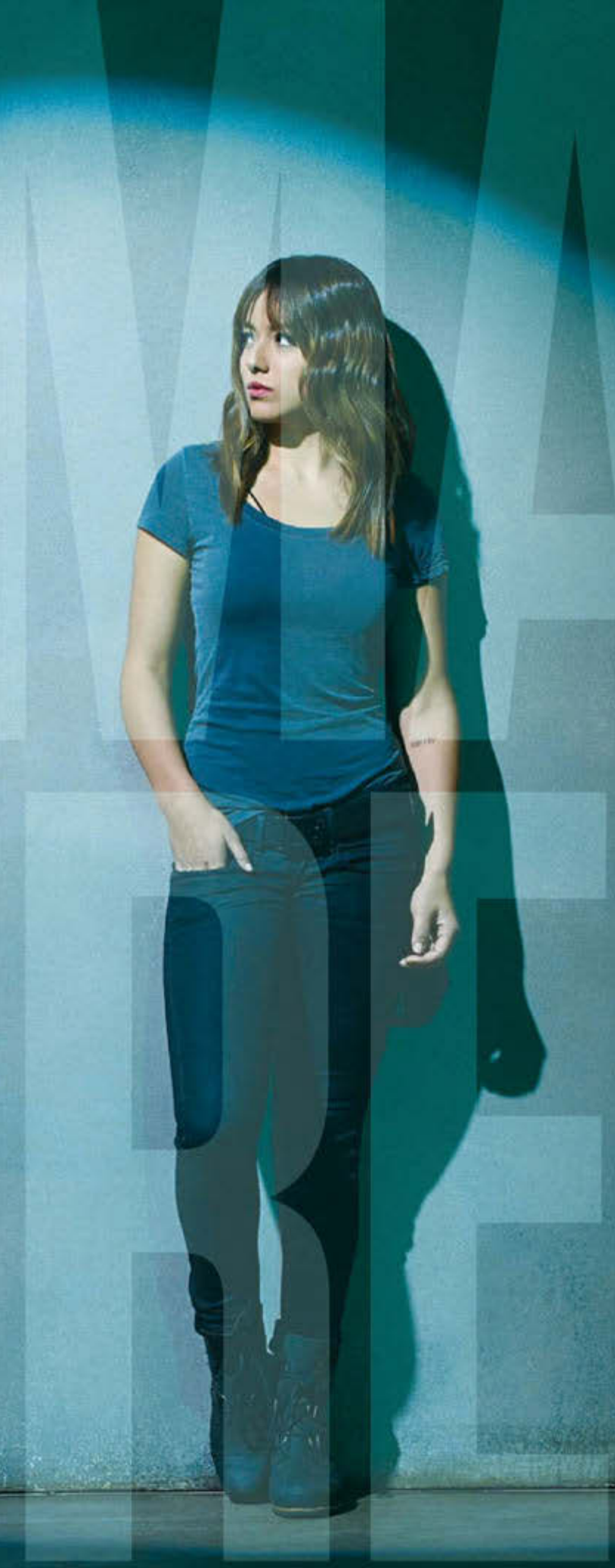
WOLVERINE

If they can work things out with Spider-Man then they should be able to do the same with Logan – hopefully with Hugh Jackman.



IN THE WAKE OF THE EXPLOSIVE MID-SEASON FINALE, A NEW ERA IS DAWNING FOR AGENTS OF SHIELD. WE TALK TO MARVEL TV PRESIDENT JEPH LOEB AND STARS CHLOE BENNET AND ADRIANNE PALICKI ABOUT THE AGE OF THE INHUMANS...

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**



All images © Marvel

AFTER A ROCKY FIRST YEAR, SEASON TWO HAS SEEN AGENTS OF SHIELD SETTLE INTO SOMETHING OF A GROOVE, FINALLY BECOMING THE SHOW THAT EVERYONE hoped it could be. Things reached a dramatic peak in the mid-season finale, with the frantic scribblings of Director Coulson (Clark Gregg) leading him to a lost city and a showdown with HYDRA, during which Skye (Chloe Bennet) gained earth-shaking new powers and discovered her relation to Calvin Zabo (Kyle MacLachlan) – although these developments came at the cost of teammate Triplett (BJ Britt). With the team in mourning and renegade Agent Ward (Brett Dalton) back on the run, it's fair to say that there's a lot going on.

Sitting down to interview Jeph Loeb, Marvel's President of Television and executive producer of its various series, his enthusiasm and passion for all things Marvel-related is clear. That's certainly the case in the following discussion regarding *SHIELD*'s second season and the changes that have been coming fast and furious, including Skye's reveal as Inhuman Daisy Johnson ('Quake' in the comics) and the addition of Adrianne Palicki's Bobbi Morse, aka Mockingbird, to the regular cast.

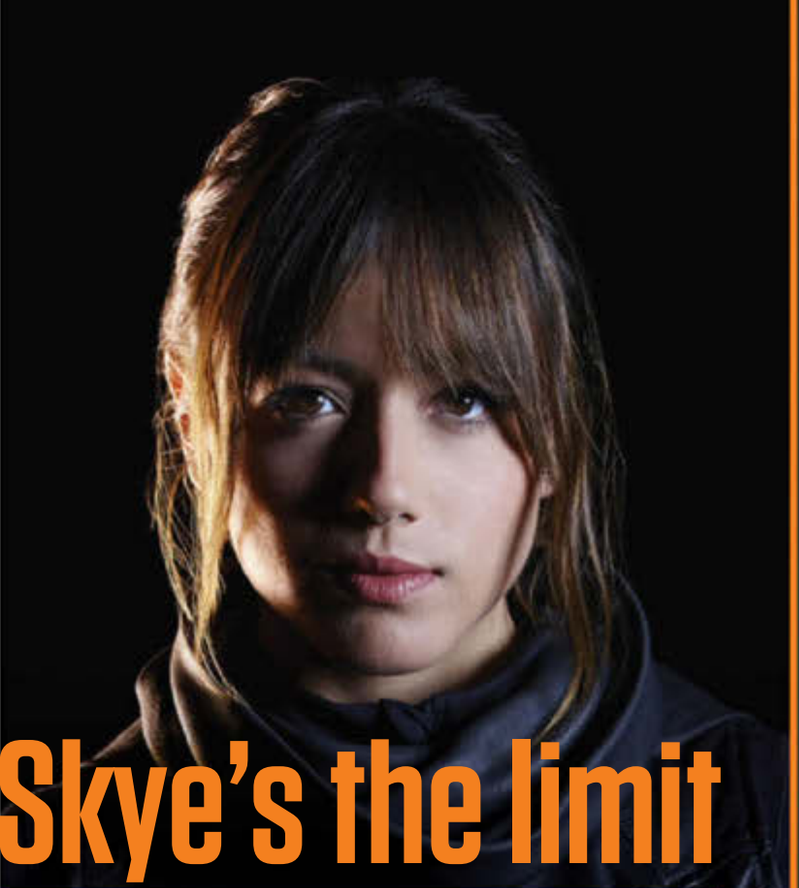
With Skye being revealed to be Quake and the addition of Mockingbird, the show is really representing strong female characters.

We're on a Joss Whedon, Jed Whedon, Maurissa Tancharoen-created show. I think that group of people in particular are well-known for strong characters.

From the beginning, Ming [Na Wen] played Agent May, and Chloe Bennet as Skye is someone who has certainly had the greatest growth in terms of a character arc. I think people are finding that surprising. Elizabeth [Henstridge], who plays Simmons, blew our doors off way back in episode six [of the first series] when she contracted the virus and broke our hearts, and we thought she was going to leap to her death. That's just some of the strong female characters that have been on the show.

I'm not going to say that adding Adrianne as Bobbi hasn't added to the scale, but I don't look at it from that point of view simply because also added this season were two very strong male characters – Nick Blood, who plays Hunter; and Henry Simmons, who plays Mack. If the characters are popping better and more, that's fantastic. Personally, I think it has to do with people falling more in love with the show. I think that happens a lot, at least in my experience, particularly on genre shows. It takes a little while for people to get used to everyone that's on the show and find their favourites and move on from there.

Do you think that tying in with *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* jump-started things creatively?



Skye's the limit

Chloe Bennet on becoming a real superhero

Skye actress Chloe Bennet remembers sitting in the hair and make-up trailer, getting ready to tackle that day's shooting of *Agents Of SHIELD* when, suddenly, the show's various executive producers entered the trailer and told everyone but her to leave.

"So I'm sitting there," she relates, "thinking, 'Oh, no. I'm either getting fired or they're going to tell me something really cool."

Needless to say, she hasn't had to file for unemployment. What they told her – and it was a puzzle she'd more or less solved on her own, given series events and personal research she'd undertaken – was that her character, Skye, was actually a super-powered 'Inhuman' named Daisy Johnson, whose powers to create earthquakes resulted in the moniker 'Quake.'

"Initially, everything is... confusion," she offers. "Her attitude is, 'I really don't want this.' Later on she'll meet some people who will help empower her, and she'll kind of come into her own a little bit. You know, every time I learn new information, I get so excited. Every time I read a script, I finish it and I'm like, 'What the...? What?' My jaw's dropped and I need the next script immediately, but we don't get them. We have to wait, just like everyone else has to wait. Which sucks!

"I'm the biggest geek on the set," Bennet elaborates, "and willing to do anything the writers come up with. Growing up, I would rather have been a character that kicked ass like a superhero than a princess. And now, with these changes in Skye, it's become a really interesting origin story, which is really exciting. Anyone who's a fan of comics can appreciate it. It's like a Spider-Man figuring out his power, and I think it will be that way for a while. I would say it's the equivalent of Peter Parker going into his bedroom and being like, "Why is there a spider web coming from my hand?" and not really knowing what to do with it. She's confused, saying, 'I don't want this. I didn't want this.' But later on she'll meet some people who will help empower her and she'll come into her own a little bit. It's Skye being taken from this ordinary person to someone extraordinary, but in a series of stages."



Bennet seems to be embracing her new-found superherodom.

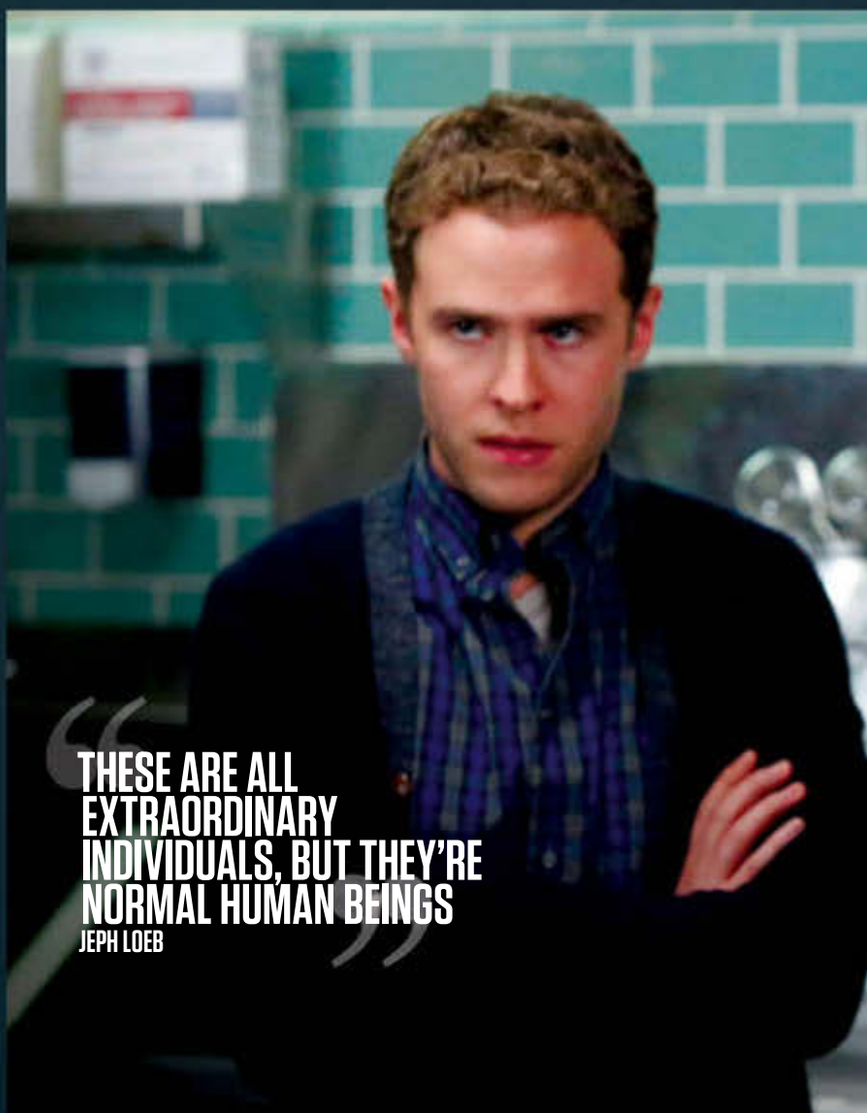
One of the challenges on the first season was that we could not use the 'H' [HYDRA] word, because we couldn't spoil anything that was in the movie. But we obviously knew where we were going. So what we had was a mystery, but the problem with the mystery was that we couldn't tell anyone there was a mystery. If people don't know that there's a mystery, they don't know how to play the game.

What's exciting to us is people who go back and watch the show from the first episode, and find the first 16 episodes to be incredibly engrossing because they know what they're looking for now. So once the movie came out, you're absolutely right, we were allowed to tell stories where we could play the card up. For many people it felt like a different show, when in fact, no, it's the same show. You're just now in on it.

It seemed that prior to the tie-in to the movie it was tough to get a handle on those characters.

I don't think the show gets enough credit for the fact that unlike anything else that Marvel has ever done before in terms of live-action programming – and this includes the movies – is that it was the first time that we put together – with the exception of Coulson – a group of characters that the audience didn't know. They had no frame of reference for them, and had to get to know them.

The fans in the audiences may have had an expectation that they were going to see characters that they knew. I judge this based on the fact that when we did press the first year, the question we got asked all the time was, "Is the Hulk going to be in the show? Is Captain America going to be on the show? Is Iron Man?" What I found both rewarding and delightful was that when we did press this year, people said, "Is Ward going to be redeemed? What's going to happen to Simmons? Why is Coulson writing on walls? Who are Skye's parents?" Towards that end, victory! The best television shows are the ones where you are engaged with the characters and you're invested in the characters. You invite these people into your home – or wherever you happen to be watching television these days – and you can't wait to see what



"THESE ARE ALL EXTRAORDINARY INDIVIDUALS, BUT THEY'RE NORMAL HUMAN BEINGS"
JEPH LOEB

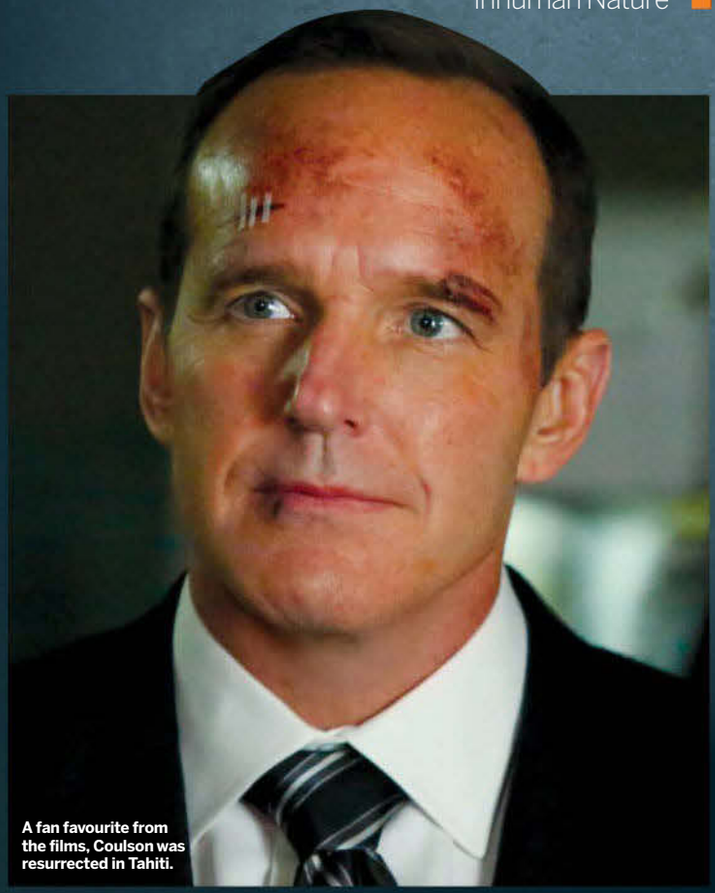
their next adventure is going to be. That's the goal.

When you take someone like Skye and reveal her to be an Inhuman, what kind of element do you feel that adds to the show?
It depends on who you are. To the Marvel fan, and to an awful lot of them, it's the "I knew it!" moment. For some Marvel fans it's, "Oh, this is really interesting. I didn't see that coming." And then for people who don't know Marvel lore or what it is to be Inhuman or who Daisy Johnson or any of those things, these are surprises along the way. The other thing people should realise, as we have proven time and time again, the mythology of the comics is exactly that: mythology. It is something that we need to be respectful of, but shouldn't be a slave to. Otherwise, you already know the story. If you've read the comic, what's the point in watching the television show? It's just a live-action version of what you've seen.

For me, as someone who came from the publishing world and who enjoyed creating those stories, I love them in their original form. Now, this is a conversation that happens all the time. When a movie is made out of a book, a novel, and the people make changes, people who loved the novel say, "Oh my gosh, you've ruined it." I believe it was Raymond Chandler who said, "When people said, 'What'd you think about Hollywood ruining your books?'" He said, "They haven't ruined my books. My books are right there on the shelf." Look at me quoting Raymond Chandler.

When *SHIELD* started, people were saying, "Well, they've got to put heroes in this some time." Yet with Skye's reveal as an Inhuman, it feels more like it's going into science fiction than it is necessarily superhero comics.
Let's be careful how we use that word.

Which word?
Science or fiction. I think really at the end of the day, when you look at the Marvel Cinematic Universe, this is the place where we do get criticism, and ⇨


A fan favourite from the films, Coulson was resurrected in Tahiti.


There have been developments for both Fitz (Iain DeCaestecker) and Lance (Nick Blood).


Simmons is proof that you don't need to be a master assassin to be a strong female character.


Coulson and May have proven to be an efficient team from the start.



To kill a Mockingbird

Adrianne Palicki on stepping out of the comic-books

Superheroines are nothing new to Adrianne Palicki, having played Supergirl once on *Smallville* and starred as Wonder Woman in a pilot. Now, she's the highly trained agent Bobbi Morse, aka Mockingbird.

"She isn't a typical soldier," Palicki offers. "As much as she is a spy and she's had this lifestyle for so long, she still hates hurting people. At the end of the day she is a soldier and a badass, but she's a good person."

Playing the 'badass' appeals to the actress. "You can't tell with the roles that I take?" she laughs.

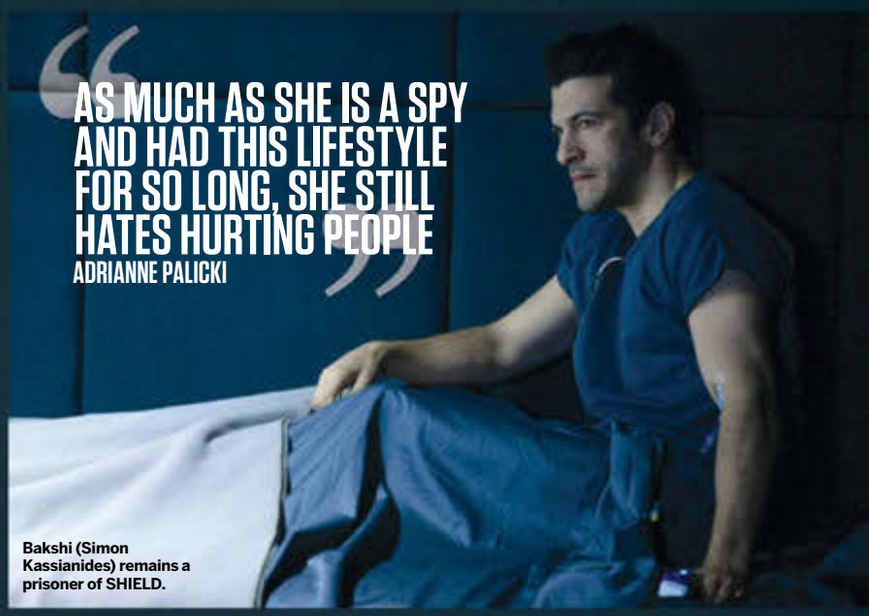
Physically, the series isn't as challenging for her as it looks. "I'm already very fit and I've played a lot of these kind of roles," she says. "For the film *John Wick*, I had to learn jiu-jitsu, which was really intense training because I'd never learned a martial art before. It's just more about the choreography of it now. But the sticks she uses in her fights are a new element – looking like I know what I'm doing... that's the challenge.

"The cool thing about the comic-book world is that anything can go," adds Palicki. "In the comics she was bad for a while, then she left the Avengers. So there are all of these different arcs that can be taken."





It's grim and stitched faces for the team.



> AS MUCH AS SHE IS A SPY AND HAD THIS LIFESTYLE FOR SO LONG, SHE STILL HATES HURTING PEOPLE
> ADRIANNE PALICKI

Bakshi (Simon Kassianides) remains a prisoner of SHIELD.



Mockingbird has become a regular member of the cast.



It seems like desperate times for the agents.



May's mother (Tsai Chin) will return.

it's because we're being compared to something that we are not coming from. What I mean by that is the Marvel publishing universe is one where everyone is very comfortable with the fact that there are hundreds – if not thousands – of powered people running around. They fly overhead, they fight with each other, they're friendly with each other, they meet up, play baseball games, they do all sorts of things. They go to weddings of other heroes. I'm tempted to say there are a dozen – though I'm sure I'm going to get caught for saying it – versions of Avengers teams through the years. That's a very different world than the world of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Where the number of actual super-powered beings are more limited?
In the cinematic universe there are really only two super-powered people. There's Iron Man, who is a normal person wearing a technological suit of armour. There's Thor, who we've all agreed is an alien. Then Steve Rogers, who had the super soldier serum that made him into Captain America. Then a version of that, in an attempt to recreate it, is what created the Hulk. And that's it. Hawkeye and the Black Widow are extraordinarily talented individuals. Falcon, War Machine... These are all extraordinary individuals, but they're normal human beings.

It's kind of like Batman working with the Justice League?
I would never say that. If that's the case, then the world doesn't really know or readily accept that there are people that have abilities or enhancements. If that's the case, then what is happening to Skye right now is extraordinary. Every single time we meet someone who has an enhancement, a gift, it is not the norm. It is, in fact, something that we don't understand. How is this happening? Why is that happening? What does that mean? What could happen to all of us if these individuals start to spread, turn against us, do any of the things that we normally are afraid of when we start dealing with the world of fear?

All of those things are interesting, and were the basis of the Marvel Universe when the Marvel Universe began. It's happening again, only now it's happening in the live-action world. That's part of why, when people want to see a lot more powered people running around, we have to look at: where did they come from? How did that happen? They didn't just fall out of the sky, so what is the origin of that person's abilities and why did that person have abilities that other characters don't have? The more unique we make that, the more special we make that, then the greater impact it has than the world of people that are running around with powers and abilities.

So these things are not seen as normal, everyday occurrences like they are in the comics?
We may get there someday; it may be something that we readily accept. But again, what makes the Marvel Universe and what makes *SHIELD* so much fun is that discovery of, "What will I become?" If the answer to that question is something unexpected, something unwanted, something unimaginable, then it makes the need to watch the show that much better.

Season Two of *Agents Of SHIELD* is airing now on Friday evenings at 8pm on Channel 4.

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Alan Jones - FrightFest

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"Draws you into its odd, half Lynchian, half COMPANY OF WOLVES dreamscape"
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FROM THE THE WALKING DEAD TO BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, COMPOSER BEAR MCCREARY HAS SPENT THE PAST DECADE CRAFTING A UNIQUE BODY OF WORK FOR SOME OF TELEVISION'S MOST POPULAR SERIES. HERE, HE DISCUSSES HIS CAREER, GENRE EXPECTATIONS AND HOW UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIENCE CAN BE A COMPOSER'S BEST CREATIVE ASSET WORDS **PAUL WEEDON**

THE SOUND *of* THE DEAD



RELAUNCHING A BELOVED FRANCHISE IS OFTEN A DAUNTING PROSPECT – NEVER MORE SO FOR THE CREATIVE TALENT INVOLVED. IN LATE 2003, A BUDDING YOUNG COMPOSER WAITED ON TENTERHOOKS TO SEE HOW FANS MIGHT REACT to the new interpretation of a popular sci-fi franchise, long absent from screens since the late Seventies.

"It's hard to remember now," McCreary explains, "but back in 2003, before that miniseries aired, people were very concerned about our *Battlestar Galactica*. We were coming fresh off of *Star Trek: Enterprise*, which had its moments, but I think fans of the genre were a little dismayed by the main title song because it felt so inappropriate for the genre."

The revitalised *Battlestar Galactica* made its debut on the Sci-Fi Channel (now known as Syfy) on 8 December 2003, and fans around the world soon found that any fears they might have had were unfounded.

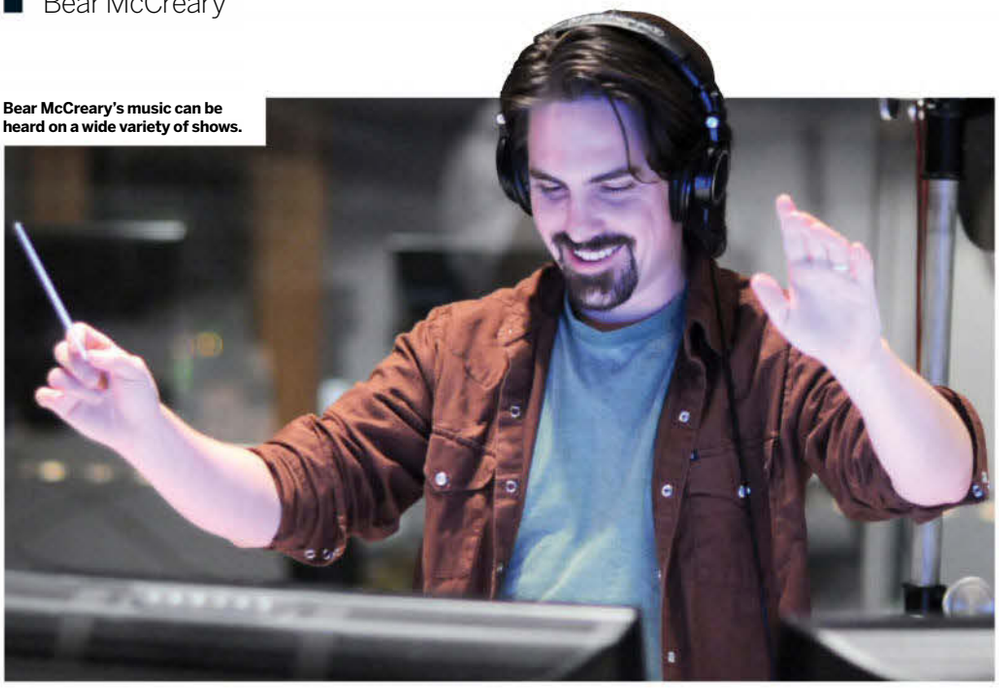
"You had a show that was very dark and very earthy and lost a lot of the trappings that supposedly science fiction genre fans were expecting and creatively the show was a runaway hit. The fact that it didn't have big triumphant brass in its opening main title scene – obviously, that did not dissuade people from watching it."

Having worked under the tuition of prolific film composer Elmer Bernstein for almost ten years, McCreary had garnered a wealth of experience composing for independent shorts, which would prove invaluable in assisting composer Richard Gibbs on the miniseries that re-launched the *Battlestar Galactica* franchise. When the show received a full season order, Gibbs was unable to devote full-time to the series, and a fresh-faced McCreary stepped up to the challenge.

"To say that *Battlestar* was the turning point is to imply that there was a career before that," he jokes. "I was so immersed in that world that when the lucky break came – and it was a lucky break – I just had the feeling that I needed. I knew the players that I wanted. I feel like there was a combination of being prepared for the lucky break when it came."

That lucky break kick started an enviable career, with the composer going on to score over 70 episodes of the series. Since then, he has seldom been short of work, working across an array of projects over the course of the last ten years. Each has brought with them their own unique creative challenges, but perhaps the most interesting is the prospect of toying with what a genre might conventionally sound like.

"I think that 'genre' is a word that has taken on so many meanings over the past ten years," he muses. "It's something that's a bit of a double-edged sword for me. I love science fiction and fantasy and horror and I think my love of those genres helps me in working in those genres. At the same time, I don't really know what it means to score music that sounds 'like science fiction'. You have to



Bear McCreary's music can be heard on a wide variety of shows.

acknowledge that fans are coming to a genre piece with certain expectations, but I think that is often best when you subvert those expectations."

The *Battlestar Galactica* score's penchant for experimentation remains one of the show's great assets, and one that paved the way for other series to break similarly experimental musical ground. Since then, the past decade has seen McCreary's CV expand considerably to boast the likes of *Agents Of SHIELD*, *Constantine* and, most notably, *The Walking Dead*.

The latter saw McCreary become heavily involved in conversations with the show's creator, Frank Darabont, and executive producer, Gale Anne Hurd, long before the show was even cast. At the core of their discussions was the way in which the show's music might define the overall tone of the fledgling series.

"The thing that makes it so interesting is it's an open ended world. I wanted to do something that was iconic to the world and the environment and the way you feel when you watch it, but not necessarily to write themes that bond you to specific characters. My general emphasis has been creating a Pavlovian response – when you hear those strings coming in before the main titles, you always know that you're watching *The Walking Dead*."

If sci-fi comes with its own set of conventions to be defied, then the musical tropes associated with horror are an even more daunting proposition. With jump-scare clichés and intense string orchestras now the norm, audiences have grown all too well accustomed to the tools in a composer's toolkit – something McCreary acknowledges has ultimately come to lessen the impact of the music itself

"The whole genre requires an understanding of its principals more than any other by far, because familiarity breeds comfort. The more often you hear something, no matter how dissonant and screechy it is, the less scary it becomes over time. There was a bit of an arms race in horror scoring in the late Seventies and throughout the Eighties and Nineties where scores kept getting louder and more bombastic. You'd have a 100-piece orchestra and everybody screaming and scraping, and it became a somewhat desperate attempt to continue to scare people, because they just weren't scared anymore. They were familiar with the tropes and familiar with the sounds."

The show's distinctive theme tune employs a simple, recurring string motif, played by an ensemble orchestra, which is something McCreary felt would set it apart from the more melodic, synthesised sound that has come to embody horror in recent years. Over time this has evolved on an episode-by-episode basis, resulting in a theme that the audience often hears differently depending on the circumstances portrayed in an episode's opening moments.

"In the beginning, I was going for a very acoustic, Bernard Herrmann-influenced sound. I combined it with a lot of distorted and manipulated instruments from the region – Bluegrass instruments, country instruments, western folk instruments. I used the banjo to represent the threat from the walkers, but it doesn't sound like a banjo because we ran it through so many effects and distortions that it ended up as this really unique sound."

Following Darabont's departure midway through the show's second season, former producer of *The Shield* Glen Mazzara took the reins of showrunner before former writer Scott Gimple assumed the role from Season Four onwards. Under Gimple's leadership, season four began to explore some of the darker themes of Robert Kirkman's source material, most notably the latter episodes, which marked a tonal shift to considerably darker territory, even by *The Walking Dead*'s unapologetically morbid standards. Consequently, the biggest challenge for season five was what McCreary cites as a sense of "long term endurance," both for the audience and for himself as a composer.

"The story arc was so meticulously planned out by Scott Gimple that in the first episode, he already knows what's going to happen in the last three minutes of the last episode. Musically, I'm always trying to foreshadow, sometimes to help hide certain pieces of information that Scott doesn't want you to figure out too early."

Tactically misleading the audience has therefore become something of an art form for the composer, but juggling the action of individual episodes and the show's complex overarching narrative is another thing entirely.



The Walking Dead **is perhaps the biggest show currently bearing his dulcet tones.**





He credits *Battlestar Galactica* as the turning point of his career.







His recent credits have included *Agents Of SHIELD* (left), *Outlander* (above) and *Constantine* (below).





> I THINK YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR AUDIENCE IS EXPECTING GOING IN TO A FILM OR A TV SHOW AND BE PREPARED TO EITHER GIVE THEM EXACTLY WHAT THEY WANT, OR COMPLETELY BLINDSIDE THEM. I'VE BEEN IN EVERY ONE OF THOSE SCENARIOS

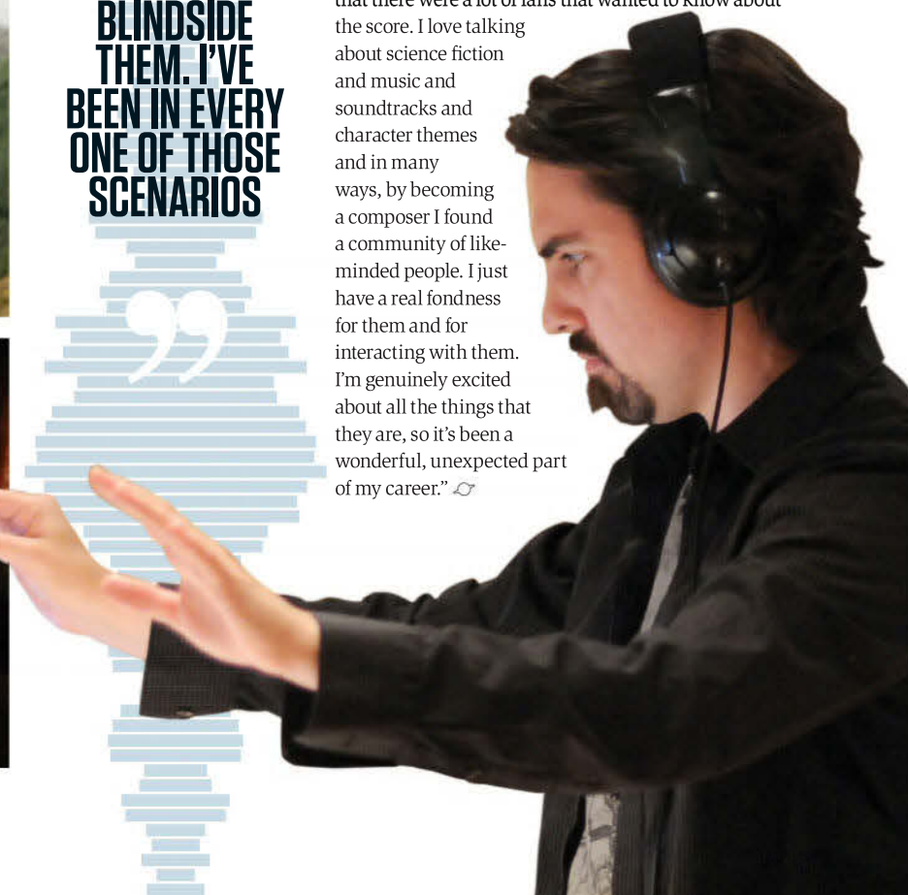
"Ostensibly, it's a show where people are trying to survive being killed on a weekly basis," he observes. "But in reality it's a much more complex narrative. You have the micro concern, as I call it, where you have to make the scene itself work and you have to keep ratcheting up the tension – how do you make a piece of music that keeps building without running out of steam? That in and of itself is a challenge."

In a resurgent Golden Age of television, where many of his contemporaries are producing compelling work of their own across a wide variety of genres, McCreary occasionally laments that his schedule often prevents him from being able to check out the work of his peers.

"I'm aware of what people are doing and I've heard a lot of their stuff, but the funny thing is I have so little time to watch TV," he concedes. "I definitely hear a lot of great stuff, but I wish I had more time to really sit down a get inspiration from them. I can barely keep up with watching the shows that I'm working on!"

With a busy line-up of over half a dozen projects this year alone, including new seasons of *The Walking Dead*, *Agents Of SHIELD* and *Outlander*, as well as the upcoming Salma Hayek action film *Everly*, as ever, McCreary has plenty to sink his teeth in to. But when he isn't busy tinkering away in the studio, McCreary has carved a reputation among fans for providing valuable insights in to a creative process that often slips under the radar. Having embraced social media early on in his career, it's something he's come to value greatly.

"Look, I'm a nerd," he laughs. "I really enjoy interacting with fans, writing blog entries detailing the scores and the themes that they're interested in, showing session footage and showing what it's like working in my studio. I found, especially when I started on *Battlestar Galactica*, that there were a lot of fans that wanted to know about the score. I love talking about science fiction and music and soundtracks and character themes and in many ways, by becoming a composer I found a community of like-minded people. I just have a real fondness for them and for interacting with them. I'm genuinely excited about all the things that they are, so it's been a wonderful, unexpected part of my career."



MAD AS HELL

THE END IS FINALLY NIGH. GEORGE MILLER AND TOM HARDY TALK TO SCIFINOW ABOUT BRINGING BACK MAD MAX FOR ANOTHER NON-STOP FULL-THROTTLE RIDE THROUGH THE APOCALYPSE

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL** INTERVIEWS **STEVE NASH, JULIDE TANRIVERDI**

WE KNOW WHAT THE APOCALYPSE LOOKS LIKE; WE'VE SEEN IT A MILLION TIMES, WHETHER IT'S OVERRUN WITH ZOMBIES, SCAVENGERS OR PSYCHOS. It's an arid, endless wasteland where everything wants to kill you. It's a violent, heartless hell. We know this because George Miller showed it to us.

Every genre has its defining movie. George A Romero told us what zombies were, Ridley Scott set the template for every urban sci-fi since *Blade Runner*, and George Miller defined the post-apocalypse movie. Not only that, he gave us the man who drove through it: Mad Max Rockatansky.

Now, 30 years after we last saw him, Miller has revived his greatest creation for another ride through the desert furnace. He may have a new face courtesy of star Tom Hardy, but every glimpse we've seen of *Fury Road* has reassured us that this is most definitely Max.

"George gave birth to that apocalyptic environment," Hardy enthuses. "He invented that fantasy, visual world. There are a lot of references which just go back to *Mad Max* and the words 'post-Apocalyptic.' He really invented the car-chase movie, and this is just full on. He's taken all the assets we have now with 30 years worth of thinking, and poured it into X amount of hundreds of millions of dollars worth of care. He's enjoyed every second of it."

Indeed, there's only one man we would trust to bring Max back to the big screen. It's rare for a film series, especially in this genre, to so clearly bear the stamp of a single creator. Miller tells us that it was slightly surreal to return to the world that he defined for a fourth film. "It was very familiar and very strange," remembers Miller. "Mainly familiar, because when you work on a film it's like working with imaginary friends. And because it's three decades later, the world has changed ⤳



DESIGN A POSTER FOR

Mad Max: Fury Road

Our sister magazine **Photoshop Creative**, in association with Warner Bros Pictures & MCM Comic Con, is challenging talented artists to design a fan poster of the film. Entries will be judged by George Miller, with the winner displayed at MCM London Comic Con on 22-24 May 2015.

To find out how to enter and for full terms and conditions, visit **http://blog.photoshopcreative.co.uk/competitions/mad-max**

For further information, join **www.facebook.com/MadMaxMovieUK** or follow **@MadMaxMovieUK**

so much – meaning the world we live in and the technology. And I think the way we perceive films has changed. It was interesting to be back after doing animation, because there's an intensity, strange sort of masochistic exhilaration of live action, being in the desert crashing cars and risking it all. Things could go horribly wrong."

Miller has had a rich and varied career in the 30 years since Max braved Thunderdome, taking in the likes of *Witches Of Eastwick* and *Happy Feet*, but the question of a new *Mad Max* film was always on everyone's minds, including Miller's.

"We were able to go back into that post-apocalyptic world. It took me a long time to figure out why I was so seduced by it," he explains. "I couldn't stop thinking about it. This world is very, very elemental, very spare, and therefore you can tell stories within, which basically are allegories, in morality anyway. The simplest way to describe them is a Western on wheels."

> "HE HAS NOT GOT ANY SUPERHERO ABILITIES. BUT HE IS AS ICONIC AS YOUR BATMAN OR YOUR SUPERMAN"
> TOM HARDY



INEVITABLY, A LOT OF QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ASKED ABOUT HOW FURY ROAD FITS INTO THE SERIES, AND IT'S A QUESTION THAT MILLER SEEMS KEEN TO BAT AWAY. "IT'S NOT A REBOOT and it's not a sequel," he explains. "The best description I have is a revisit. It certainly goes back to the first apocalyptic world. Essentially, we set out to do a chase. It's pretty much a 110-minute chase, and during that chase you discover the characters and their relationships and the back story." The film throws Max into a break-neck journey across the desert alongside the determined Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron), with the monstrous Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne, who played Toe Cutter in the original *Mad Max*), tearing after them.

Every *Mad Max* film needs two sides for Max to find himself between, and Miller tells us that Theron's Furiosa has a lot in common with our hero. "She's the boss of a war rig, and she's essentially a female road warrior," he explains. "But unlike Max she has purpose. Max is running from his past and from his better nature. She's very strong. We wanted an actress who is unmistakably a woman, but had made no concessions to being the kind of strong warrior. Charlize has the ability and the passion as an actor to go there without fear. I think there's a character there that we haven't seen before."

"Charlize is not afraid to just bare everything in her work," enthuses Hardy. "And she can back it up as well."

With the basic plot structure established, the question of who exactly would play Max was raised. Miller tells us that Gibson was involved in discussions back in the early Noughties, but it soon became clear that another actor would be needed to step into the leathers and 1,000-yard stare. "When I



Charlize Theron was picked for her bad-ass femininity.

THE MADDEST OF THE MAD

Charting the craziest moments of the Mad Max series, one rev at a time

1. Mad Max
2. Mad Max 2
3. Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome



The Nightrider cops it
Mad Max opens with an incredible chase, as the Nightrider trails destruction that ends in a fireball.



Man's best friend
Max's dog is one of the most underappreciated elements in *Mad Max 2*, and we especially love it when he holds a shotgun.

Cooked Goose
Following tradition, Toe Cutter is particularly nasty villain, as evidenced by convincing Johnny to burn Goose alive.



Tina Turner
Tina Turner's presence in the film is a source of amazement. She has lots of fun calling Mel Gibson "Raggedy man."

The pigs
Miller's future as co-writer of *Babe* was foreshadowed with the importance of pigs in his vision for the future.



first met Mel I just thought he was a really interesting actor," remembers Miller. "But there was a quality about him. On one hand you wanted to really get to know him, because he was very lovable, but on the other hand there was that element of danger and unpredictability. It's like when you work with animals. It's like you see a tiger – it's so beautiful and powerful and you just want to pet them, but they're a tiger. There is that paradoxical thing that gives these actors charisma. The moment I saw Tom, he felt to me like Mel did all those years ago."

When it came to taking on the role of Max, Hardy tells us that the decision was an easy one. "I didn't hesitate at all," he states. "I think, as a young actor, to play Max is a huge opportunity. It's fantastic. To be honoured and graced to get the opportunity to play, out of all the superheroes that are about – bottom line – the most cool." He also made sure to clear the air with his predecessor, who unsurprisingly signed off on Miller's choice. "Oh, yeah, we had lunch," remembers Hardy. "It was a 'hand the baton over' moment. It just seemed like the right thing to do… Mel's Max, right? It was an experience. And he told my agents that it was really good that I was playing Max, and that they had probably found someone who's more insane than he was! I take that as a compliment."

But who is Max, beyond the man in the biker leathers? The first film plays out as a chase spin on a revenge movie, as highway cop Max punishes the lowlifes who brutalised his family and partner. It's in *Mad Max 2* that we get a better idea of who the character is in Miller's fully post-apocalyptic world. He's a man who's looking to be on the road alone, but there are lines that he won't stand to see crossed. He's more of a spiritual cousin to Clint Eastwood's Man With No Name or Toshiro Mifune's Samurai than he is a six-packed saviour of the world's end.

"The thing about Max is that he is quite real," enthuses Hardy. "Things hurt Max. He is not somebody who can fly, or somebody who if he stubs his toe, it is not going to hurt. He is not someone who can just leap across a river. He has not got any superhero abilities. But he is as iconic as your Batman or your Superman; he is very earthed. He was one of our 'superheroes', if you like, who wasn't necessarily a superhero, but an iconic character; in the same way that Batman would be. The world around him is fantastical, but built on very solid materials."

The solid world of *Fury Road* is built in Namibia, rather than Broken Hill, Australia as originally planned. Miller and his team needed a location where they could realistically shoot a movie that's essentially one giant car chase. From *Mad Max*'s hot-pursuit opening to the train-bound capering of *Thunderdome*, each of the previous films have boasted incredible chase sequences, and Miller embraced the possibilities that a higher budget and the latest filmmaking tools could offer.

"IN TERMS OF THE TECHNOLOGY IT'S A BIG DIFFERENCE," HE EXPLAINS. "WE CAN DO A LOT MORE. FIRST OF ALL, WE WORKED WITH DIGITAL CAMERAS, WHICH MEANS THAT YOU can put them anywhere. Some of them we could buy at the airport for $2,000, and if you wreck them it didn't wreck the budget. You can put them places we could not before, and get your camera crew out of the way of an explosion or a big crash."

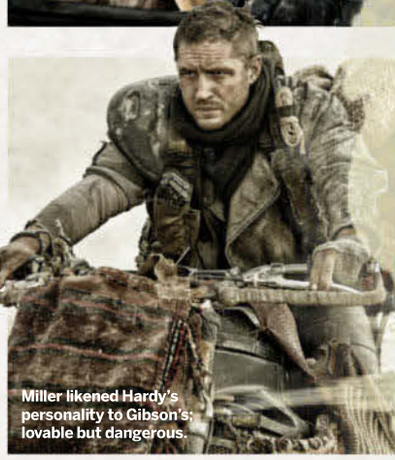
Still, it wouldn't be a *Mad Max* film without having its fair share of hair-raising stunts. The original films set the bar for insane car crashes that you can't believe were actually created, let alone survived. Hardy stresses that Miller's legendary prowess has not diminished, and that although CGI has been used, a huge amount of effort was put into keeping the effects as practical as possible.

"This is very specifically a film in which there is a very minimal amount of CG," he explains. "There's a huge amount of effects work going on, but it's very minimally computer generated. Every single vehicle, every single person you see thrown about, every single accident, every single fight, there are people actually attacking each other. There were over a hundred stunt lads and girls on a daily basis for six months. I think every time you see something happen that was a moment which we lived fully, some more fully than others. And then repeatedly to get the shot right. So every time we see a car roll over or a lorry being spun in the air or things flying at you, they're actually really there."

"You've got people actually trying not to kill themselves in the pursuit of somebody's dream. And they actually make something ⇨



Charlize Theron's Furiosa is another colorful new character.



Miller likened Hardy's personality to Gibson's; lovable but dangerous.



Miller called Theron's Furiosa "a female road warrior".



Head on collision
Toe Cutter gets his come-uppance as Max chases the biker gang leader directly into the path of an oncoming lorry.





Handcuffed
Max gives Johnny a choice. Cuffed to a car about to explode, he must choose to cut through his restraints – or his ankle.





Wez
Few villains make as big an impression as Vernon Wells' Wez, with his outlandish costume and gleeful villainy.



The final chase
It's hard choose a moment from *Mad Max 2*'s finale, but we'd pick the look on Wez's face as he realises he's about to crash.



Boomerang
It's tough to top the arrival of the Humongous' force, but the feral kid throwing a deadly boomerang at them is crazier.



Tomorrow-morrow Land
Max bundles the desert kids into Jedediah's plane to head for Sydney, where Savannah tells the story for the 'membering.



THUNDERDOME!
It's surprising how briefly Thunderdome actually appears. Two men enter. One man leaves.

© CG Textures

come to life. This is what makes *Mad Max* really brilliant. Everything you see is happening: lots of smashed cars, all the explosions, they were there. All those cars, they went over. Everybody was up there in the sun, in 100+ degrees, every day, for six months, eight months, nine months some people. It was a huge orchestration."

The heat wasn't the only challenge to come from shooting in the Namibian desert. A remote location is desirable when you're mounting a car chase that stretches out for the length of a film, but heading out into the desert away from civilisation was something of a mixed blessing.

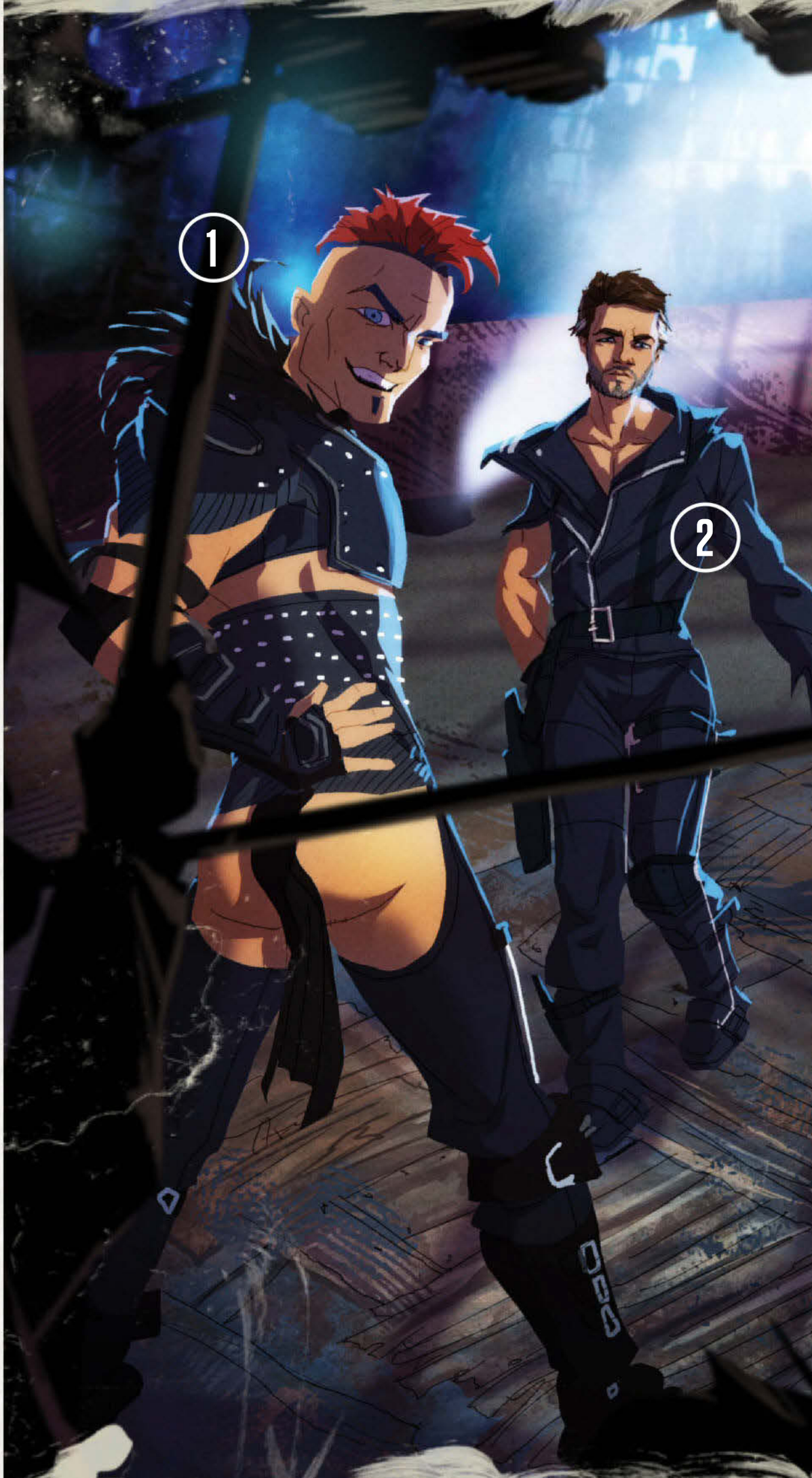
NAMIBIA'S A VERY COOL COUNTRY, VERY WELCOMING, AND VERY BEAUTIFUL, TOO," REMEMBERS HARDY. "BUT WE WERE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. SO AFTER a few months you do start to see yourself in anything – and not always in the best way. They say, 'A man will find himself in the desert.' It's pretty silent and you realise how small you are. On the one hand, it's incredibly comforting because nobody bothers you. You would go a bit potty. But it was a lot of leather and yeast infections."

The delays to the production of *Mad Max* were well publicised. There were issues with the locations, there were reshoots back in 2013 – it feels like we've been waiting a very long time for Miller to bring us the madness. However, he's been living with this world for a lot longer than we have, and we suspect it will be worth the wait. He's just as entranced by the sun-blasted landscape and the loner who drives through it as we are.

"There is so much noise out there it's hard to know what the truths are," he tells us. "The straightest line to the truth is through story and there's a beauty. So you've got to sort of try to find something and that's why we tell each other stories. By taking that reduced world, you don't have to deal with the complexities that we deal with, and you can get down to much more elemental human behaviour. The other thing is the visual part of it. There are no trees in *Fury Road*. To actually put vehicles and people in that landscape is visually very exciting as well. Basically, it allows me to make a western on wheels. I'll say you don't have to be crazy to make a *Mad Max* movie, but…"

"I'm really pleased for George, because he's really smashed it," enthuses Hardy. "He deserves that, it looks brilliant, and that's testament to every asset he had from design right through to the stunt guys. It's just brilliant that George managed to put it together. And I hope he does more, to be fair, because it's a brilliant kick-off point."

Mad Max: Fury Road will be released in UK cinemas on 15 May.





THUNDERDOME FASHION WEEK

Welcome to Thunderdome, where fashionistas from around the desert come to judge the latest offerings from designers of fetish gear, biker leathers and repurposed sports equipment. Whether you're a leader or a lieutenant, a fighter or a talker, there's something here for everyone. Six models enter, one model leaves...

1 Wez

If you find yourself the lieutenant/loose cannon of a marauding gang of lunatics, you're going to want to stand out. Leather, spikes, a Mohawk and the crucial ass-less chaps make you unforgettable.

2 Max

Max is sporting the loner look. Biker leathers are a must in the dusty wasteland of the apocalypse, and these are all business. If you absolutely must have companionship, get a dog.

3 Immortan Joe

You're a warlord, and you want everyone to know it. You also might have some kind of respiratory issues, so this terrifying mask acts as a breathing aid. Muscle suit and medals are fun flourishes.

4 Aunty Entity

Technically, Master might be the ruler of Bartertown but when you look this fabulous, everyone's going to know who's really in charge. Big hair and chainmail? None more fierce.

5 Warrior Woman

Leave the fetish gear to the nutters. If you want to survive the end in style, kit yourself up in hockey pads, mesh movement gear and a headband for the ultimate good-but-tough Glamazon look.

6 The Humungous

People can't be wondering who the leader of this band of psychos is. Make a statement and let everyone know who you are with this daring ensemble. Straps, studded pants and a Jason Voorhees mask. Done.

© David Cousens

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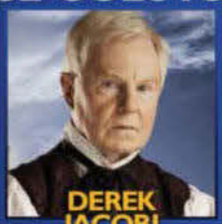
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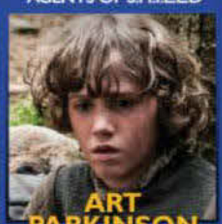
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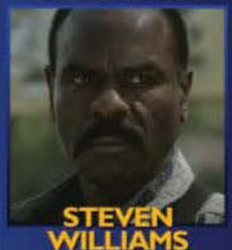
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STAY THE NIGHT

WORDS
MICHAEL SIMPSON

WE CHECK INTO BATES MOTEL TO HEAR THE CAST SHOWER US WITH CLUES ABOUT WHAT'S COMING IN THE THIRD SEASON OF THIS MODERNISED PREQUEL TO PSYCHO









BATES MOTEL'S SECOND SEASON ENDED WITH NORMAN BATES PASSING A LIE-DETECTOR TEST THAT COULD HAVE IMPLICATED HIM IN THE DEATH OF HIS teacher, Blair Watson. In the season's final scene, Norman Bates (Freddie Highmore) slowly raises his eyes to the camera with a blank expression that suggests some part of him knows he might have got away with murder.

This chilling image echoes the last sight of Norman that we see in the show's principal inspiration: Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 movie *Psycho*. In the final scene, Anthony Perkins also looks up at the camera and smiles as if he knows he won't be going to jail for the murders he committed.

This parallel is a perfect preface to the third season of *Bates Motel*, which promises to further align the show's mythology with Hitchcock's movie and Robert Bloch's novel. This is what Highmore has been expecting from the beginning. "I have always seen the end point of the series as *Psycho*, whether or not they end up playing it out completely or have some version of events," Highmore says when we visited the Vancouver film studio where *Bates Motel* is filmed. "Norman is always evolving ever more towards that version that we see in the film."

As written in both Bloch's novel and Joseph Stefano's script for *Psycho*, the adult Norman is basically a puritan recluse. In contrast, the teenage Norman in *Bates Motel*'s first two seasons goes drinking with friends and has even had sex with two local girls. That will change in the third season, according to Highmore, putting his character on the path to becoming the homicidal hermit that Bloch envisaged.

"We do see him have fewer interactions with other people, and he's a much more internally focused person," says Highmore. "A lot of the struggles that he has are with himself or with visions that he conjures up of other people or other things. So as his distinction between reality and what goes on in his mind is ever more blurred, we see him spend much more of this time in his own world."

It seems inevitable that Norman's retreat from social interaction will entrench the mutual interdependence he shares with his mother, Norma. This, too, is consistent with the scenario that is set up in the novel. There, it leads to a love-hate relationship that has Norman cursing his mother one day and cleaning up the bloody messes he blames on her the next. We see evidence of how far such a relationship develops in *Bates Motel*'s third season when we're invited to watch Highmore and Vera Farmiga, who plays Norma, rehearse a heated argument that could have life-threatening consequences for one of them near the season's climax.



Season Three will see the way in which Norman views his mother change.

"We start off after that dramatic end to the second season where Norman finds out who he really is and what he's capable of," Highmore says after the rehearsal. "That is the basis from which we get a sense of continuing mistrust in the fact that his mother has hidden this from him for so long. That sense of

distrust between both of them sets the tone for their relationship in the third season, and they both start to evaluate their relationship. They've always assumed that their relationship is lovely and perfect and not at all odd. I think both of them in different ways start to question it in the third season, as opposed to just maintaining this status quo. It starts to become problematic for both of them."

"Norman is in that very precarious stage of adolescence where he's figuring out what it is to become a man," adds Farmiga. "He's being raised by a single mother and figuring that out and feeling everything that a child feels when you are discovering your own sexuality. There's a draw to his mother, but simultaneously there's this push; the simultaneous need for closeness, but then a repel. You are going to see the most extreme closeness and tenderness, such uncomfortable closeness between them, and then the opposite pendulum swing of almost complete alienation and betrayal."

The scene Highmore and Farmiga are rehearsing takes place on the main staircase of what has become known as the 'Psycho house'. The stairs are part of a studio set that represents most of the main and first floors of the Bates' home. The furnishings and appliances aren't exact replicas of those depicted in *Psycho*, yet, they evoke the same period and the sense of a place that, in Bloch's words, is 'outmoded', right down to the Fifties-style suitcase that we've just watched Norman and his mother tussle for.

The exterior of the house is several kilometres outside Vancouver on the site of a former landfill. Together with the row of motel rooms it overlooks, the house took six weeks to build, and lacked a physical roof for the show's first season. The roof has since been added, and the entire set is now authentic in almost every detail. Moreover, it is right beside a public road, and people occasionally drive up, thinking that the motel is real.

We are given a tour of the motel office in which Perkins' Norman peeped at Marion Crane as she undressed before her fateful shower. That room is just a shell on this set, but two other rooms have been made up. In one of those we were asked to play dead in the bath tub that held Keith Summers' body in the pilot episode.

WE'RE TOLD THAT THE HOUSE AND MOTEL BECOME NORMAN'S REFUGE IN SEASON THREE AFTER HE DECIDES TO BE HOME SCHOOLED. AS NORMA INCREASINGLY becomes the centre of Norman's world, though, that 'uncomfortable closeness' Farmiga referred to will intensify into jealousy, says Max Thieriot, who plays Norman's half-brother, Dylan Massett.

"Norman hates to see Dylan and Norma get close. It's out of jealousy, because he feels like he's the only son, but also out of this bizarre sexual jealousy," says Thieriot back at the studio. "We get to see it from all perspectives: we get to see Norma not liking Norman and Dylan doing their thing, we get to see Dylan thinking that they're really weird together, and we get to see Norman being jealous of Norma and Dylan."

In Season Two, Norma admits to Dylan that he was born as a result of her being raped by her brother Caleb (Kenny Johnson). Caleb's brief visit to White Pine Bay last season temporarily tore the family apart and gave us an early glimpse of Norman channelling 'Mother' when the teenager attacked his uncle during a mental blackout. Caleb will be back for a longer visit in Season Three, and will have a role to play in Norman's descent into insanity, according to Johnson.

"They've gone with such a gnarly storyline with Norman and Norma that is insanely great," Johnson says. "It's so powerful and so deep. The family dynamic is so effed up and so deep and dark that definitely he is part of something also that is a trigger."

In Bloch's novel, Norman's resentment of his mother's love for another man led him to poison both of them after he found them in bed together, which is said to have triggered him to take on his mother's identity. Hints of similar possessiveness were seen in the second season when Norma dallied with George Heldens (Michael Vartan). George now seems to be out of the picture, but that doesn't mean Norman will be getting mum to himself.







Above: Norma (Vera Farmiga) with her brother Caleb (Kenny Johnson). Right: Expect to see the relationship between Norman (Freddie Highmore) and Norma take a sinister turn. Far right: Norma continues to show an interest in Sheriff Romero (Nestor Carbonell). Opposite page: The more the series progresses, the more it ventures into *Psycho* territory.

© Dylan Coulter



© Joseph Lederer

Last season, Norma made a connection with Sheriff Romero (Nestor Carbonell) after the lawman had to move into *Bates Motel*. Without saying there will be romance, Carbonell teases us with hints that Season Three will bring the characters closer together.

"One can only hope," says Carbonell, who played the seemingly immortal Richard Alpert in JJ Abrams' *Lost*. "This is a world where happiness is fleeting. I don't know if and when that will be consummated, that relationship, but it's certainly explored."

That attraction is based on an admiration for the way that Norma has "stuck her thumb at the town," explains Carbonell. Given the future history that has been established for Norman in the show's source material, however, shacking up with Norma hardly seems like a safe choice, especially for a character that is not in *Psycho*. Unsurprisingly, Carbonell admits that he doesn't take his character's longevity in this show for granted.

"We had this issue on *Lost*; you never know when it's your time," he laughs. "I hope I last as long as I can; I'm having the time of my life on the show. If I can prolong getting hooked up with Norma as long as I can, that might help."

There is plenty of life left in *Bates Motel*. It seems likely that in this season, Highmore's Norman will make big strides towards becoming the character Bloch and Hitchcock created. Nonetheless, Carbonell says we should expect a few more years worth of episodes before we see the finished article. "They have a very specific end game in mind. I think they always envisioned five seasons. Every episode is packed with interesting twists and turns that don't feel at all as if the story is being stretched just to stretch it."

Bates Motel is airing now on Wednesday nights at 9pm on the Universal Channel.

HINTS OF HITCHCOCK

Five clues in the trailer that Season 3 will bring us closer to Psycho

1 00:03
In the opening scene, someone is putting on red lipstick, and later we get various instances of Norman fondling women's clothing. Together with an earlier trailer that hinted at Norman wearing one of Norma's cardies, this seems to be a clear hint that Freddie Highmore will be playing dress-up sometime this season.



2 00.24
Norma tells Norman that she is going to make him hotel manager, and he accepts. He presumably learned enough from his mother before the events of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, too, because he kept the Bates Motel going for the ten years after her death (the script shortened this from 20 years in the novel).



3 00.33
In *Psycho*, Norman gets an eyeful of a disrobing Marion Crane through a hole in the wall of the motel office before venting his sexual frustration with a carving knife. Here, he's shown apparently watching someone getting undressed through an open window after we've seen him looking through a peephole in two other trailers.



4 00:46
During what appears to be a frantic exchange between Norma and Norman, we hear the former scream what sounds like, "You were going to kill me, Norman." Soon after, we're shown a body floating in the swamp. Norman murdered his mother using rat poison in the *Psycho* back story, and later made a habit of dumping bodies in swamps.



5 00.54
Finally, we see Norman fully submerged in the bath. Then, we hear Norma say, "We all go a little mad sometimes," and Norman suddenly opens his eyes. That same line is spoken by Perkins in *Psycho* when Norman is telling Marion about his mother.





Bleeding Hearts



SCIFINOW GOES ON SET FOR PENNY DREADFUL'S SECOND SEASON TO TALK WITCHES, BRIDES OF FRANKENSTEIN, WOLFMEN, AND WHY OUR GOTHIC HEROES ARE IN FOR MUCH, MUCH MORE ELEGANT SUFFERING...

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL** INTERVIEWS **JONATHAN HATFULL, STEVE NASH**

WE'RE STANDING IN THE LABORATORY OF DR VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN. JARS OF FLUORESCENT CHEMICALS LINE THE WORK SURFACES, HUNDREDS of feet of wires crisscross above us, and anatomical drawings cover the walls. A can of Lilt hidden on the desk is a tip-off that we're not in a real Victorian physician's workspace, rather the stages of Ardmore Studios, where *Penny Dreadful* Season Two is wrapping up, but the level of detail is staggering. As we're taken around the home of Sir Malcolm Murray, into the freezing, austere bedroom of Vanessa Ives and through the incredible costume, make-up effects and prop departments, the world of *Penny Dreadful* is so convincing that it's not too surprising when supervising producer Chris King tells us that some of its stars are having nightmares.

"I haven't, actually," laughs Billie Piper, who's returning as Brona Croft – in a way – for the show's second season. "I sleep like I'm dead, so it's not been a problem for me. But I can imagine in places it would start to wander through people's subconscious – it's kind of unrelenting, rightly so! There's a lot of [blood and guts] in the show, and I think that mounts up in Season Two. I'm not squeamish at all, thank God." ⇨





The Art And Making Of Penny Dreadful by Sharon Gosling is available now from Titan Books.

Green's performance was the highlight of the season.





The Dublin set was suitably creepy and atmospheric.

Timothy Dalton, who stars as the driven Malcolm, hammers home the unrelenting nature of the filming process. "It's long, wet, dank, miserable and depressing," he intones. "But the work's good. Good work is always enjoyable, a good challenge is always enjoyable. And that's what we're here to do."

At first glance, *Penny Dreadful* didn't seem like the kind of series that would put its cast through such emotional torture. A lavish Gothic horror set in Victorian London could have easily prioritised the gorgeous costumes (designed by the legendary Gabriella Pescucci) and stunning sets (not to mention the beautiful cast), but it quickly became apparent that writer John Logan wasn't interested in anything superficial. The show looked heavenly, but put its characters through hell.

"Well, the show is called *Penny Dreadful*!" Logan exclaims when we ask if we can expect to see our heroes go through a similarly tough time. "Yes, because those things that bond us as human beings which are my interest as a dramatist, whether it's a play or a movie, is the search for love, is the search for acceptance, and if that search is satisfied there's no story. And whether they learn to love themselves and the beasts that they are, either literally or figuratively, or learn to accept the world around them and how they fit into it, there has to be an ongoing story to me."



Timothy Dalton's grief-stricken Malcolm has to deal with the consequences of his failure.



Season One was focused on Malcolm's hunt for his daughter Mina. Along the way we learned about Vanessa Ives' (Eva Green) bond with a demon and saw her fiendish possession. We saw Dr Frankenstein (Harry Treadaway) hounded by his Creature (Rory Kinnear), who in turn was tormented by his inability to connect with humanity, and finally witnessed the transformation of Ethan Chandler (Josh Hartnett), an American gunslinger running from a dark secret that turned out to be lycanthropic in nature. This band of tortured souls did finally find Mina, but that hunt didn't end well. This year, the game is a little different.

"Last season they were hunters; this season they are hunted," teases Logan. "I look at Season One as the chance to introduce the audience to the characters and the world, so essentially we're putting the chessmen on the board. In Season Two, we get to play with them in a really muscular way. Ethan learns exactly what he is; he's hunted by a very dogged inspector, and has drawn closer to Vanessa in every conceivable way due to the pressure on them. Malcolm is drawn into a relationship with Evelyn Poole [played by Helen McCrory] that alienates him romantically, personally and supernaturally from the rest of the people in the series. And Dr Frankenstein is grappling with a new life form, which is a woman – the woman he killed, Brona Croft – and has to deal with what those emotions, feelings and sensitivities are."

"What we had to do last season was set up characters and create the dynamics between them, and in this season it just gets to mature," adds Hartnett. "It just feels like a richer version of *Penny Dreadful*."

PLAYING WITH THE FATES OF HIS CHARACTERS INVOLVES INTRODUCING SOMETHING THAT THE FIRST SEASON DIDN'T REALLY HAVE: A PROPER VILLAIN, in the form of McCrory's Evelyn. "This season it's a more linear narrative, and there's an adversary," enthuses Logan. "We embrace witchcraft. The quest they're on is to battle Evelyn Poole, who lives in the world of the occult and the supernatural, as they learn more about themselves. Last season we had the vampires, brooding and silent creatures, and now we have a proper villain,

VAMPING OUT

SCIENTIFICALLY DETERMINING THE EXTENT TO WHICH EVA GREEN HAS DOMINATED HER FILMS

THE GOLDEN COMPASS (2007)
Serafina Pekkala

A small role in the forgettable Chris Weitz adaptation of Philip Pullman's classic novel. Not particularly memorable.



FRANKLYN (2008
Emilia/Sally

Green plays a suicidal artist in this underrated fantasy-noir/real-world hybrid and delivers a fierce, hypnotic performance.



PERFECT SENSE (2011)
Susan

Gives a grounded, emotional turn in this tragic romantic sci-fi in which the human race loses their senses one by one.





Season Two sees the cast of *Penny Dreadful* go from being hunters to the hunted.

and we enjoy her immensely."

The exact nature of Poole's villainy is kept from us, although we're given teases here and there (the word 'necromancy' comes up), but everyone is keen to stress how good McCrory is. She appeared in two episodes of last season as 'Madame Kali', most notably hosting the séance where a possessed Vanessa tormented Malcolm by channelling his missing daughter ("I'm shitting blood now, father!"). In Season Two, she's set to make life hell for our heroes.

"She's one of the most powerful, because she wants what she wants," explains McCrory. "She wants it more than anyone else. This is a battle of faith, and who has the strongest faith will win. She's on the side of him down there rather than him up there… it's an extraordinary role, and [I'm] kicking it into touch as best I can."

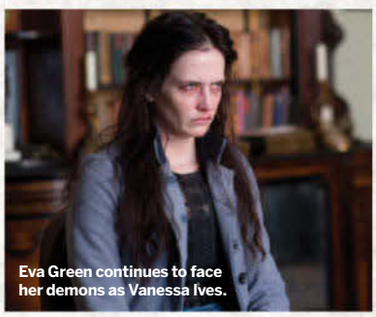
"Helen McCrory's a piece of dynamite," grins Dalton. "She's wonderful. Little girl, powerful, packs a hell of a punch. I'm thrilled to have been working with her, she's a knock-out." It won't take long for Evelyn to get close to Malcolm, as Dalton tells us that Season Two finds him as lost as he's ever been. "He and Vanessa were the backbone for Season One, that quest to rescue his daughter, and he fails," he explains. "Not only has he lost his daughter, he is a man with a rather monstrous ego! It hurts him in lots of ways, and he is left picking up the pieces. A vulnerable man makes mistakes, and he meets [Evelyn]. She's consolation for him, and that has disastrous consequences! A very bad choice! A terrible choice!"

> "MALCOLM AND VANESSA WERE THE BACKBONE FOR SEASON ONE, THAT QUEST TO RESCUE HIS DAUGHTER, AND HE FAILS… IT HURTS HIM IN A LOT OF WAYS, AND HE IS LEFT PICKING UP THE PIECES. A VULNERABLE MAN MAKES MISTAKES"
>
> TIMOTHY DALTON

Speaking of choices, Dr Frankenstein made a fairly significant one at the end of Season One when he agreed to the Creature's demands to make him a Bride, and poor Brona finds herself in a very different situation when Season Two begins. The question of how exactly these two creatures will interact is one of Penny Dreadful's most enticing.

"It's a perverse relationship, I'll say that!" teases Piper when we catch up with her on a break from shooting one of the series' climactic scenes. "It moves around. There's a lot of feeling. She has a quest and she wants him on board, so how she goes about that, with her great tools of manipulation, but whether it's born through genuine love you'll have to wait and see."

Kinnear is in full make-up and costume when he comes to relieve Piper in the interview corridor, and it's tricky not to stare at his prosthetics as he ponders the Creature's love life. "There are a few options for the Creature in Season Two," he tells us. "He gets taken under the wing of another family, so I guess a viewer should be left wondering where his love might come from. It certainly explores the avenue of the Creature's heart yet again, and there are as many downs as ups!"



Eva Green continues to face her demons as Vanessa Ives.

As for the Creature's relationship with the good Doctor, Kinnear assures us that things are smoother… for now. "There is a simpatico in the sense Victor knows what he has to do to get the Creature off his back, and the Creature wants Victor to do that," he explains. "So there is a meeting of minds or a movement towards a shared goal, but the bad blood hasn't been smoothed over."

While Kinnear has had a season of taking on an iconic role, it's now Piper's turn to put a new spin on the Bride of Frankenstein. "It's brilliant!" she exclaims. "And terrifying in equal measure, because it's such an iconic figure. But I feel like we're bringing a new focus entirely, and there's something romantic and beautiful about the interpretation. Her memories are of Brona, but her current manifestation is unique to what's been before. Physically, obviously it's very different, and I would say that personality-wise it's radically different."

We'll also get to see Hartnett's Ethan exploring his lycanthropic secret after going full wolf-man at the end of last season's finale. "I knew that I was going to be playing a wolf-man from the get-go," remembers Hartnett. "But it was only the first two scripts that we were allowed to read. So as far as how he would be revealed as a werewolf or how he would be revealed as the type of person he ends up becoming in this second season, I had no idea."

Although we're on set a couple of weeks before everything is locked away for another year, the sense of excitement is still palpable. Every one of the cast and crew seems eager for the world of the show to expand, and Logan tells us that he's hoping for many more seasons yet.

"Someone asked me, 'What do you do on your hiatus from *Penny Dreadful*?' and I said 'I'm writing the next season,'" he laughs. "I wanted to write a Charles Dickens novel. I wanted to write a story that kept going in instalments. One of the joys for me in the second season is I find the characters more interesting. It's like falling in love, in a way. If it's true love, it keeps going, because there's always new things being illuminated. I do this not for the money, I do it not to be away from sleeping in my own bed for six months; I do it because I love the show. These characters are so important to me, I cherish them. I cherish their pain and I celebrate their bravery."



Season Two of Penny Dreadful will air on Sky Atlantic from 5 May.

DARK SHADOWS (2012)

Angelique Bouchard

Green storms into Tim Burton's muddled update and gleefully steals every scene she's in. Triumphant scenery chewing.



300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE (2014)

Artemisia

Faced with the overblown ridiculousness of this sequel to Zack Snyder's zeitgeist-y shoutathon, Green sensibly decides to steal the movie.



PENNY DREADFUL (2014-)

Vanessa Ives

Penny Dreadful is definitely an ensemble show, but with frequent possession sequences and fabulous costumes, it's Green's show to steal when she wants to.



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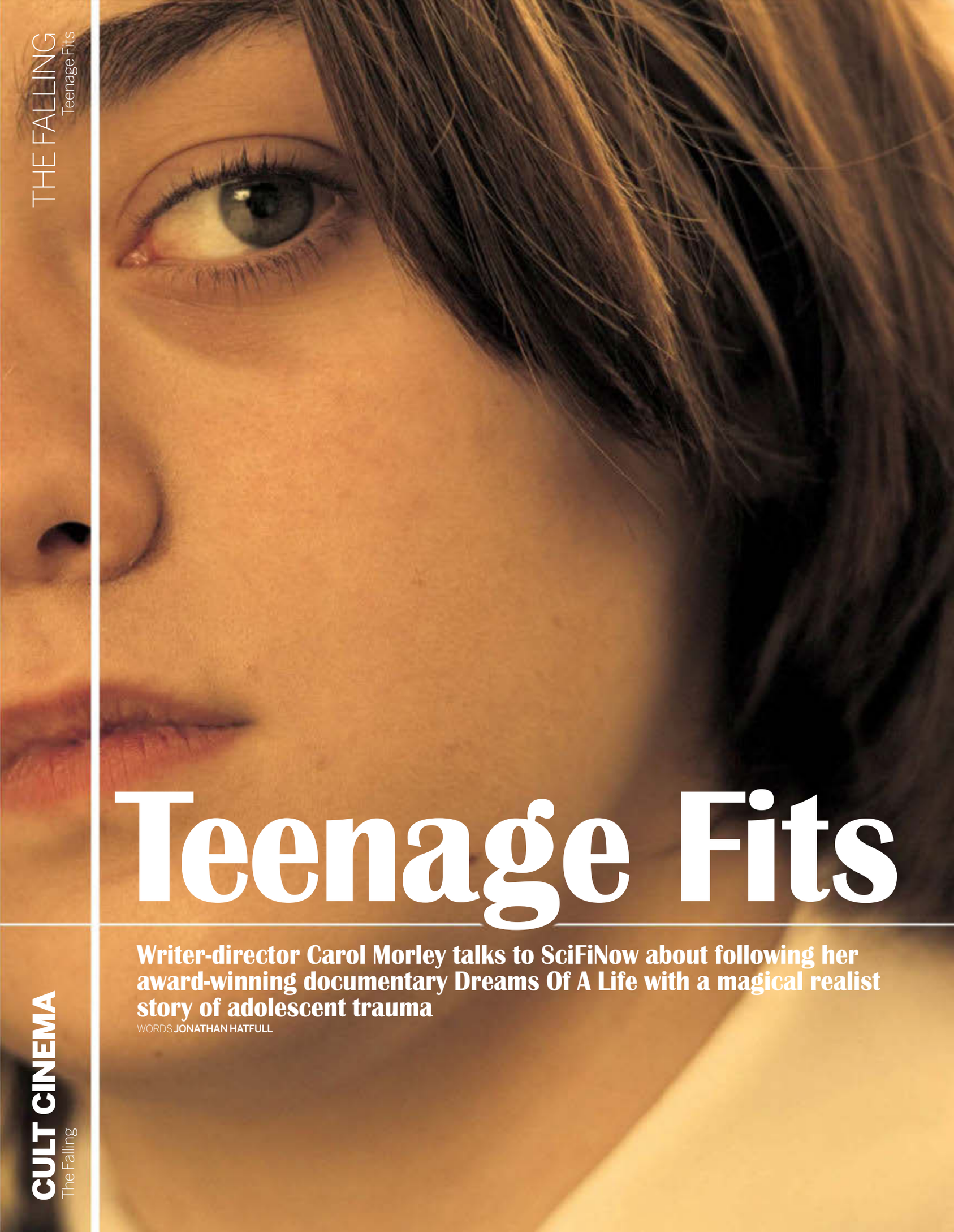
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Teenage Fits

Writer-director Carol Morley talks to SciFiNow about following her award-winning documentary Dreams Of A Life with a magical realist story of adolescent trauma

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**



If you saw Carol Morley's stunning documentary *Dreams Of A Life*, chances are it made an impression, and it's likely that her follow-up will do the same. *The Falling* is a drama set a in girls' school in 1969, and centres on the studious Lydia (Maisie Williams)'s friendship with the more adventurous Abbie (Florence Pugh). After a traumatic event, Lydia experiences bouts of fainting, but it's not long before her friends start doing the same. "I like to approach something as though it's for the first time," explains Morley. "I wanted to make a twisted coming-of-age story that represented the angst of adolescence."

Fainting Fits

Lydia's fainting could be a result of the trauma that she's going through both at home and at school, where the teachers try to act as though nothing is happening. "They've happened since medieval times in different ways," Morley tells us. "So I grew very interested, and I thought one day I want to make a film set in a girls' school, because so many of them happen in single-sex institutions… so nunneries, convents. An outbreak will usually reflect the anxieties of the time; when I was looking at the outbreaks from the Sixties, they would be around sexual anxiety of times becoming freer. I was just fascinated by the idea of a collective, almost protest, and to this day, even though there's theories around mass psychogenic illness, nobody really knows why they happen. So they are the mystery that we live with, if you like."

Ley of the Lines

While the school's headmistress (Monica Dolan) instructs her colleagues to ignore what is seen as attention seeking, it's clear that the events with Lydia are having a tremendous effect on the school, while Lydia herself explores folk magic and ley lines through her brother Kenneth (Joe Cole). Morley immerses us in this strange and uncertain world, drawing on school-bound magical realism classics like *If…* and *Heavenly Creatures*. "I was interested in almost trying to create a sense of hysteria," she explains. "So that's why we have the flash frames and almost subliminal images, so it's almost as though something's breaking down. The film is having its own hysteria. One of the things I looked at is the Carl Jung thing about the collective unconscious, which is for him symbolically represented in a body of water. We, all as people, as communities repress things, so it's the idea of old secrets rising to the surface."

Different Times

The Falling is set in 1969, and the changing times are beautifully evoked. "I did a lot of interviews with people that had been to a school at that time," Morley remembers. "It was on the cusp of things becoming comprehensive and education changing quite a lot, and someone I interviewed remembered her headmistress, and said it was really shocking, because she wore red lipstick!" Making the film a period piece also ensured that it wouldn't date. "I felt if you set a film in contemporary times, I think it would age very quickly, so by going backwards you become a bit timeless," she explains. "I think that some teenage films can age very quickly, or they're trying to be cool. Never try and be cool – that's my motto!"

God Help The Girls

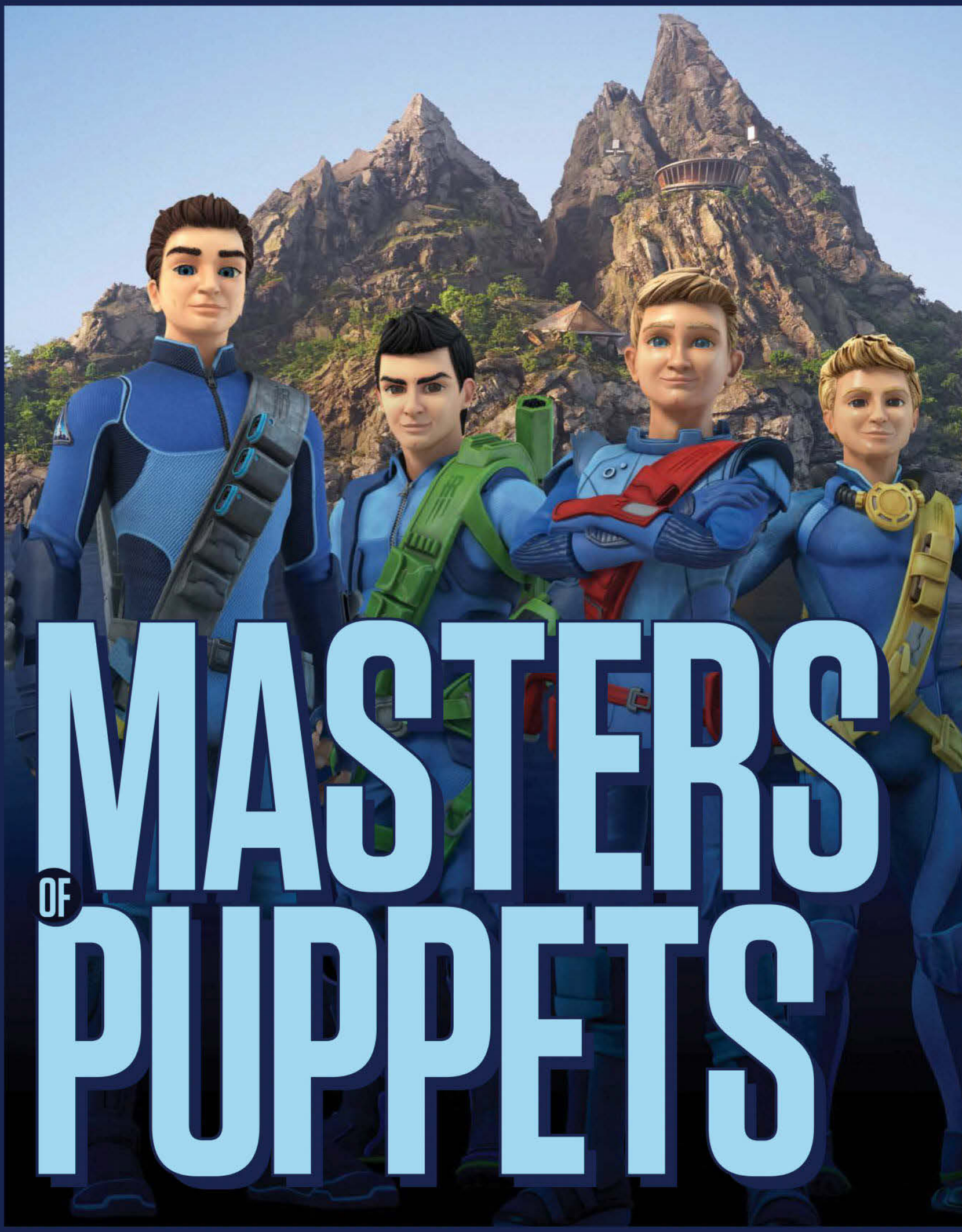
The cast is led by *Game Of Thrones* star Maisie Williams as Lydia. "I've never seen *Game Of Thrones* in my life!" laughs Morley. "We leafleted areas, which is how we found Florence Pugh. As soon as [Williams] came in I thought, 'Oh she's so right.' I had looked at her doing interviews and her dancing and stuff like that. You want to look at who people really are and then draw from that." The actors also enjoyed some era-appropriate bonding sessions. "I'm really into music informing films, so when they all met for the first time I asked them to bring a song from 1969 that meant something to them. Florence came in with her guitar and played *Son Of A Preacher Man*, and they all sang along. There's something very brilliant about music, because it unites you without you having to articulate. It's a freeing thing in a way."

Diagnosis Uncertain

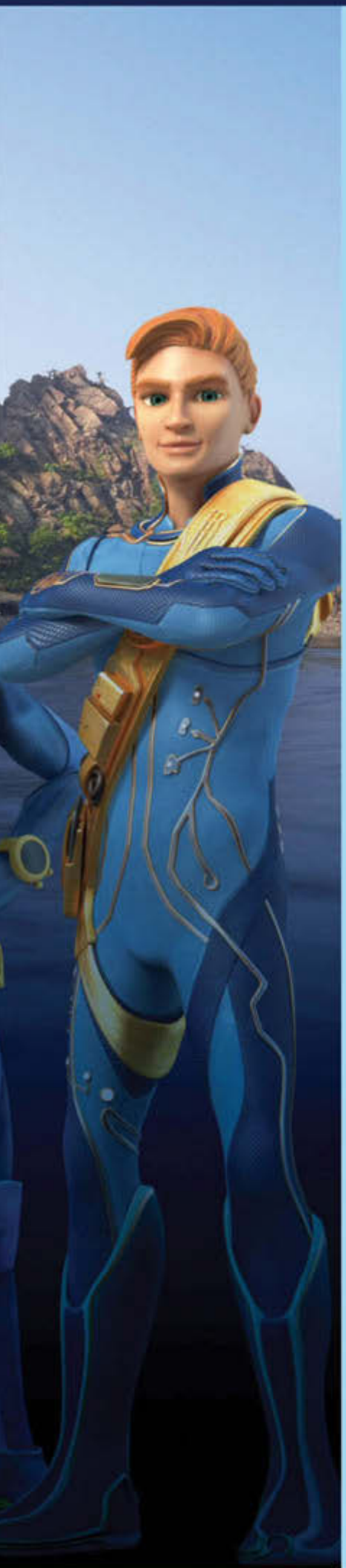
The question of what is happening in *The Falling* is made deliberately open by Morley, who was keen to include supernatural possibilities. "I feel that what I want to do when I make a film is to be, I'm trying to think of the right word so it doesn't sound completely wank-y, but I just want to make a film that has a lot of ideas in it, but is really accessible," she explains. "I was always into the supernatural element of the film, but I never saw it as, 'Oh, let's go for the horror genre,' because then you do have to meet certain expectations. I wanted to make a film that wasn't social realism, but there was a magical realism to it, so it felt not quite of this world, but it didn't fulfil generic conventions." She was encouraged by the fact that ambiguity might upset some viewers. "I always think that's very challenging, to have ambiguity. I don't want to make a film that everybody likes, because then I've done something wrong!"

The Falling will be released in UK cinemas on 24 April.

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MASTERS OF PUPPETS



THE TRACYS HAVE BEEN ON HIATUS FOR OVER A DECADE SINCE THEIR LAST OUTING IN A LIVE-ACTION FILM, BUT THEY ARE FINALLY MAKING A COMEBACK THIS SPRING, BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER, IN THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO! WE SPEAK TO THE SHOW'S VOICE ACTORS TO FIND OUT MORE...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER** INTERVIEWS **SARAH DOBBS**

IT STARTED AS A FUN SIXTIES CHILDREN'S SHOW, BUT HALF A CENTURY LATER, THUNDERBIRDS HAS BUILT UP ITS OWN PUPPET EMPIRE. THERE ARE THUNDERBIRDS lunchboxes, *Thunderbirds* action figures and *Thunderbirds* Tracy Island play sets. And it's not just children who reap the merchandise with enthusiasm. Adults who were children when the show first started collect *Thunderbirds* memorabilia for the nostalgic value.

It's easy to see why ITV has decided to get in on the action with *Thunderbirds Are Go!*. The show isn't a kids' thing anymore; it's a British thing. It might not be as huge as *Doctor Who* or James Bond, but it's something families have been growing up with for years. We spoke to the cast to find out how the franchise has managed to retain its status for almost 50 years.

"Quite simply, it's phenomenal," says Rasmus Hardiker, who voices both Scott and Alan Tracy. "The stories, the characters, the ships... the first thing that hits you in the face are those ships, and you associate the ships with the characters, and then you get to know the characters. And everything else becomes secondary. I think a story of good vs evil in space will never get old."

Thomas Brodie-Sangster, who voices Thunderbird 5 pilot John Tracy, also believes the characters are what makes the show. "The main thing is that they're rescuers; they're helpers," he says. "It is good versus evil, but a lot of the time it's just people who find themselves in a predicament with a natural disaster as well. And also, if people don't want to be saved, sometimes they have to deal with that. It's about real issues."

The characters have also become more varied this time round. The almost all-male, all-white puppet cast of the Sixties is gone, with more diversity in the primary cast. Grandma Tracy (Sandra Dickinson) is now a regular, Colonel Casey (Adjoa Andoh) is a woman, Brains (Kayvan Novak) is Indian and Tin-Tin is now called Tanusha 'Kayo' Kyrano (Angel Coulby), and has been promoted from the help to the chief of security for Tracy Island and pilot of Thunderbird Shadow.

"Well, it *is* the 21st Century," says Andoh. "Audiences now are



Scott (left) and Virgil (right) get comfy in the Tracy Villa.

MEET THE TRACYS

Thunderbirds' first family by the actors who voice them



Rasmus Hardiker as Scott Tracy

"Scott is very driven and goes into things with a full head of steam, not always to everyone's benefit, much to Virgil's chagrin sometimes, but he gets the job done more often than not. He's very hot headed and very passionate."



David Menkin as Virgil Tracy

"Virgil is very much the caretaker of the group, he's the one who questions decisions and tries to get everyone to actually think about what they're doing. At the same time, if someone needs to punch hard, he's the one who does that."



Rasmus Hardiker as Alan Tracy

"Alan is the youngest. He's a [very talented pilot], and that sometimes works against him because he's a kid, he's bound to be cocky and then he falls flat on his face sometimes. But his brothers are there to pick him up."



David Menkin as Gordon Tracy

"Gordon is a guy who loves being in Thunderbird 4, staying underwater for maybe a week at a time, but at the same time he is very much a teenager. He thinks there's something quite special about Lady Penelope."



Thomas Brodie-Sangster as John Tracy

"John [is] in orbit most of the time. He's the eyes [and ears] of the operation. He takes in the distress calls and decides how best to deal with them... That's his world. He likes the idea of being on his own."



> "THEY'RE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE – THEY DEAL WITH THE ENTIRE WORLD – SO IT'D BE ODD IF THERE WEREN'T DIVERSE FACES"
> ANGEL COULBY





so wide-ranging you need to think about speaking to lots of people. And everybody likes adventures, from all different backgrounds."

"And they're International Rescue – they deal with the entire world, so it'd be odd if there weren't diverse faces in the show" says Coulby. "It's [also] quite exciting in terms of the female characters; obviously before you only really had Lady Penelope, so to increase the amount of women is a good thing. And obviously when I tell people I'm doing *Thunderbirds*, like my parents and that generation, they're like "Oh, cool!" so I get extra kudos from them. It's a bit of a national treasure, there's a lot of affection for it, so it's great to be involved in that."

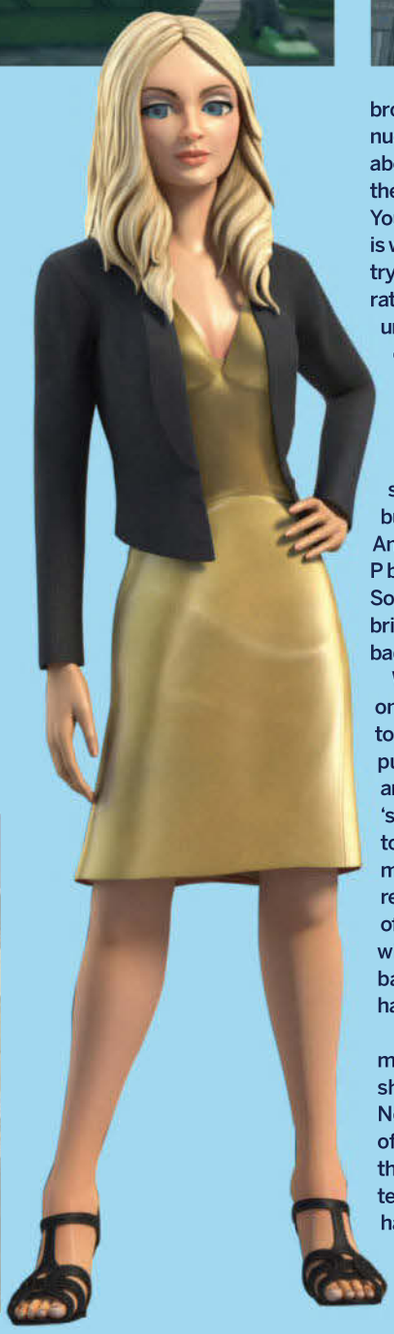
"Diversity is very important, especially in our industry, and it's not really been pushed enough," says David Menkin, who voices Virgil and Gordon Tracy. "As a pink and see-through person, I am very lucky that I get opportunities more than people of other ethnicities and other sexes, but I feel that is something that's very close to the hearts of the creators of this version of *Thunderbirds*. Out of anybody on the team, I think I would mess less with Kayo than anyone else. And all the Tracy brothers know that and the fact that there's something very important that we haven't talked about, but family is not necessarily blood. Family is working together, and accepting each other for who they are and knowing you can ask them for help and they can ask you for help and I think that transcends everything."

Andoh agrees that the emphasis on family is a big part what makes *Thunderbirds... Thunderbirds*. "You have all the dynamics of the Waltons or *The Dukes Of Hazzard* with the brothers. There's a lot of [mimes nudging] going on," she says. "It's about a widower and his sons [saving the world]. It's rather moving, isn't it? You're grieved and bereaved, and this is what your response is: to go out and try to make things better. I think that's rather beautiful, and in a world of great uncertainty I think there's something enormously comforting about the idea of an International Rescue and a Global Defence Force out there.

"And then you've got the quirky thing of Lady Penelope and Parker, so you've got that nostalgia thing, but Parker is secretly pretty kick-ass. And you've got Rosamund Pike's Lady P bringing in the glamour element. So I think it's taking lots of things and bringing it all into focus in opposing the bad guys."



The show was created with a mixture of real-life set models and CGI characters.



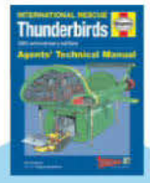
When you think of the *Thunderbirds*, one of the first things that come to mind is the same for everyone: puppets. Or, as creators Gerry and Sylvia Anderson called it, 'supermarionation'. That's likely to change this time round, as the marionettes have been updated and replaced with CG characters. But fans of the artistry in the original series will be pleased to know the all the backdrops and settings are in fact hand-made live-action model sets.

"The CGI element married with the miniatures is what's going to make this show even better than the original," Novak insists. "It still has that tradition of model making and that artistry that goes into it married with modern technology, which means you don't have to have bits of string holding up plastic puppets.

"The charm, I think that was the best thing about the original. There

Isle of Wonder

We take a look beneath the surface of the original Tracy Island, the home of International Rescue



More illustrations like this can be found in ***International Rescue Thunderbirds Agents' Technical Manual: 50th Anniversary Edition***, written by Sam Denham and illustrated by Graham Bleathman. It will be released in September, published by Haynes.

The Tracy Villa
The Tracys' island mansion doubles as the home of International Rescue.

The Round House
TB3's launch bay is hidden by a holiday home for Tracy Island's guests.

Thunderbird 1 launch bay
TB1 launches from under the Villa's swimming pool, which is cool no matter how you say it.

Atomic power plant
A shielded nuclear fusion reactor powers all of Tracy Island's rescue systems.

Thunderbird 3 launch bay
Alan Tracy can take a rail trolley back to the Villa to relax after space missions.

Thunderbird 2 hangar
The pods, including the Mole and TB4, are loaded onto TB2 via the Pod Conveyor.

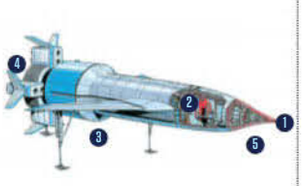
Brains' main laboratory
Brains uses his super-cool underground lab to develop new rescue equipment.

Pod vehicles bay
'Pod vehicles bay' sounds a lot cooler than 'garage', which is essentially what it is.

The runway
Palm trees lining the runway disguise the width of TB2's huge wings.

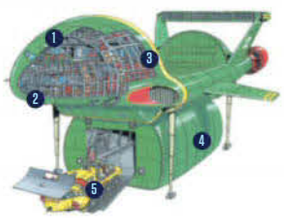
The Cliff House
Helps disguise the cliff face's entrance to TB2's Hangar doors.

Thunderbird 1



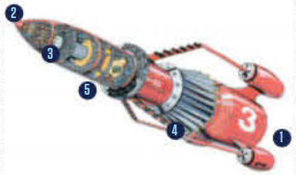
1. Heat-resistant nose cone
2. Life-support systems
3. Vertical landing gear
4. Variable mode ramjets
5. Destructor canon

Thunderbird 2



1. Missile-firing hatch
2. Winch for Rescue Cage
3. Fuel tanks
4. One of six interchangable pods
5. Firefly

Thunderbird 3



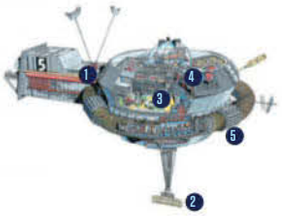
1. Ion drive thrusters
2. Forward sensor array
3. Flight control deck
4. Reactor cooling vanes
5. Radio safety beam transmitter

Thunderbird 4



1. Stabilising fin
2. Sealable rocket launch thrusters
3. Airlock hatch doors
4. Starboard axial flow Turbine
5. Lighting trough

Thunderbird 5



1. Movable screens stop sun glare
2. Main monitoring antenna
3. Lounge
4. Crew quarters
5. Anti-meteor Deflector Coil

© ITV
Vehicle illustrations courtesy of Haynes/Graham Bleathman. Tracy Island illustration courtesy of Carlton Books/ Graham Bleathman

was charm, there was a hand-made feel to it. It's a great skill for puppeteers and model makers to create this, and the brilliant voices, and the adventures and the explosions. You've got all of that with this. You still feel that stamp of quality. It's made with a lot of love, and I think when something's made with a lot of love, people love it."

Even though it has undergone quite a hefty re-reworking, the stars believe that sentimentalists will still get a kick out of *Thunderbirds Are Go!* and succumb to the nostalgic value.

"I watched *Thunderbirds* as a kid, and *Terrahawks* and *Captain Scarlet*, and I was always aware of what a legendary show it was, so to be part of it now is an honour," says Novak. "And it's really fun to do, to get in a sound booth with hilarious actors and go on adventures. I'm excited to watch it. It's good when you're in something that you're really looking forward to seeing."

"There's a renewed interest in space and exploration and science at the moment," says Andoh. "When the first series came out, it was at that great moment of 'we're going to walk on the Moon and what's next?' Now we've got the Beagle and landing probes on comets and stuff like that, so I think there's a return to that enthusiasm. It's a hot topic at the moment, so it's a great time to bring that back.

"I think commissioning editors will be of a certain age and will remember it the first time around," continues Andoh, "and with the technology that's available now, you've got the nostalgic element with the characters who have the original energy about them, but they're in a framework which is 21st-century animation. This is pretty dark and fast-paced as well. I think it's taken everything that some of us would go 'aw' about and brought it up to the tastes and viewing mores of today, really."

Of course, the enthusiasm for space and science isn't the only thing that's making a comeback. David Graham, who voiced Lady Penelope's reformed criminal manservant Aloysius Park in the Sixties, is returning to lend his voice to the character once again. Like many of the fans, Graham couldn't be more thrilled about it.

"It has been great. I never thought it would happen," he says. "[Executive producers Giles Ridge and Estelle Hughes] actually came up to see me, and I think they were checking me out to see if, after all this time, I was still in one piece, but I think they were suitably impressed, and I'm absolutely delighted to recreate the character.



Scott on his way to Thunderbird 1.



Even though 50 years have passed since the first series, Graham admits it wasn't difficult to perfect Parker's Cockney voice again. "It was in my vocal DNA. Over the years, since the first series, I've done voiceovers and people have asked me to do it. Although I'm old in age terms, my voice still has a youngish quality. It doesn't equal my age, my voice. I'm very glad about that. I never smoked – I think that was why, thank God. Everybody smoked when I was younger, like chimneys!"

Along with Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward, Parker is still easily one of the show's most recognisable and best-loved characters, and it's not difficult to see why. "He just appealed to people," says Graham. "In the original series he was just a small-part player, and he slowly grew and he became Gerry [Anderson]'s favourite character. Not because of me particularly, I had an input, but he just seemed to resonate with people, and I hope he still does.

"Time moves on and social things change, so it has to be done for a modern audience, but I'm hoping that the die-hard fans will, you know, because the basic format is the same. The *Thunderbird* theme is the same and the baddies get it in the end, but the special effects in the new series are just stunning, because technology has moved on, it's just amazing what they do, so I'm hoping it'll satisfy the oldies and the younger generation."

Thunderbirds Are Go! will air on ITV in April.



It's hoped that *Thunderbirds Are Go!* will resonate with viewers both young and old.



> PARKER JUST SEEMED TO RESONATE WITH PEOPLE, AND I HOPE HE STILL DOES
> DAVID GRAHAM

ALL CHANGE

All about the new-look cast



Brains (Kayvan Novak)
Novak's put his own spin on Tracy Island's boffin Brains; he's now an Oxford graduate who came over from India to study.



Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward (Rosamund Pike)
Lady Penelope is still her glamorous self, but now she's younger and considerably less pink.

Aloysius Parker (David Graham)
The only returning original voice. Parker's professional relationship with Lady P is still going strong, but he's ditched the suit for a stylish polo neck.

Grandma Tracy (Sandra Dickinson)
Though she's not a pilot, Grandma Tracy is still an important part of the community, and she's bringing back the bum bag.

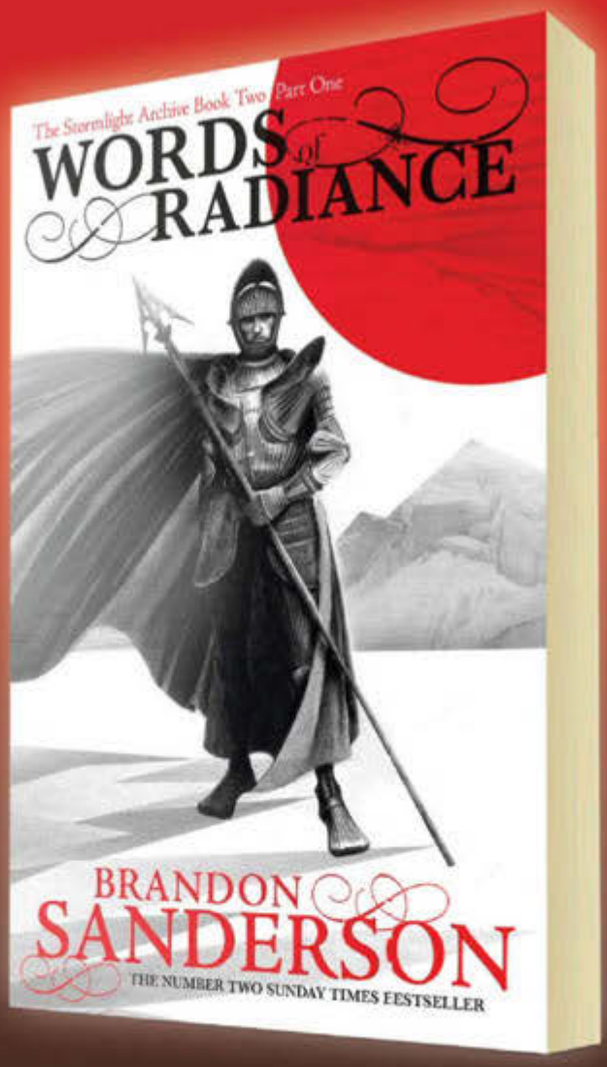


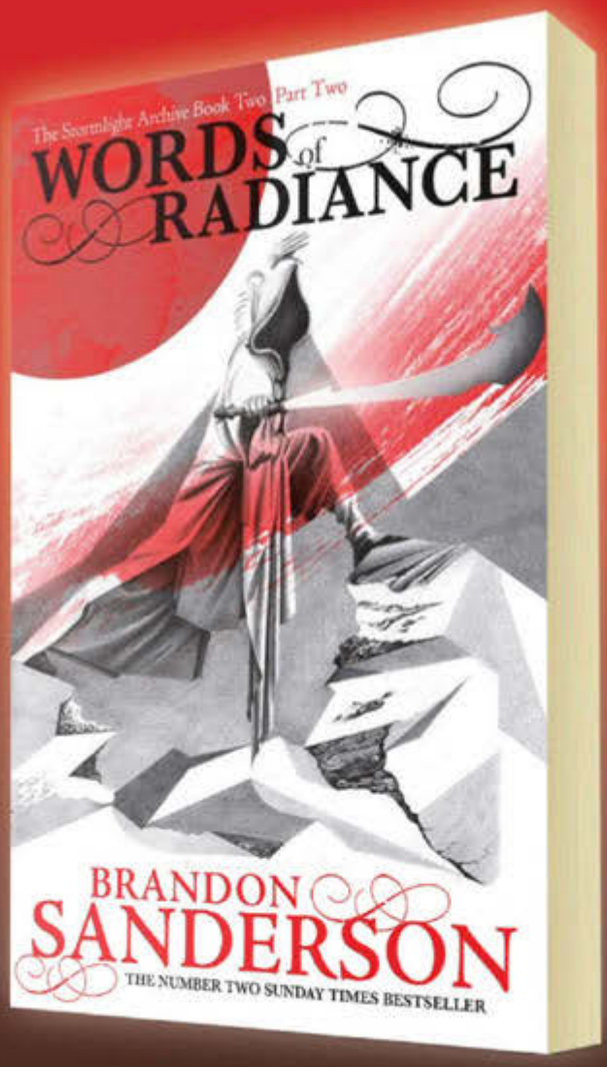
Tanusha 'Kayo' Kyrano (Angel Coulby)
Strong, feisty and always on the go, Kayo doesn't mind indulging in a bit of fisticuffs. She has also got a couple of dark secrets hidden away.

The Hood (Andres Williams)
He's a man of many disguises, which is why he's called the Hood. Like most villains, he's the good guy in his own mind.

Colonel Casey (Adjoa Andoh)
Casey is the no-nonsense head of the Global Defence Force, and she is always there to lend the Tracy brothers a hand.

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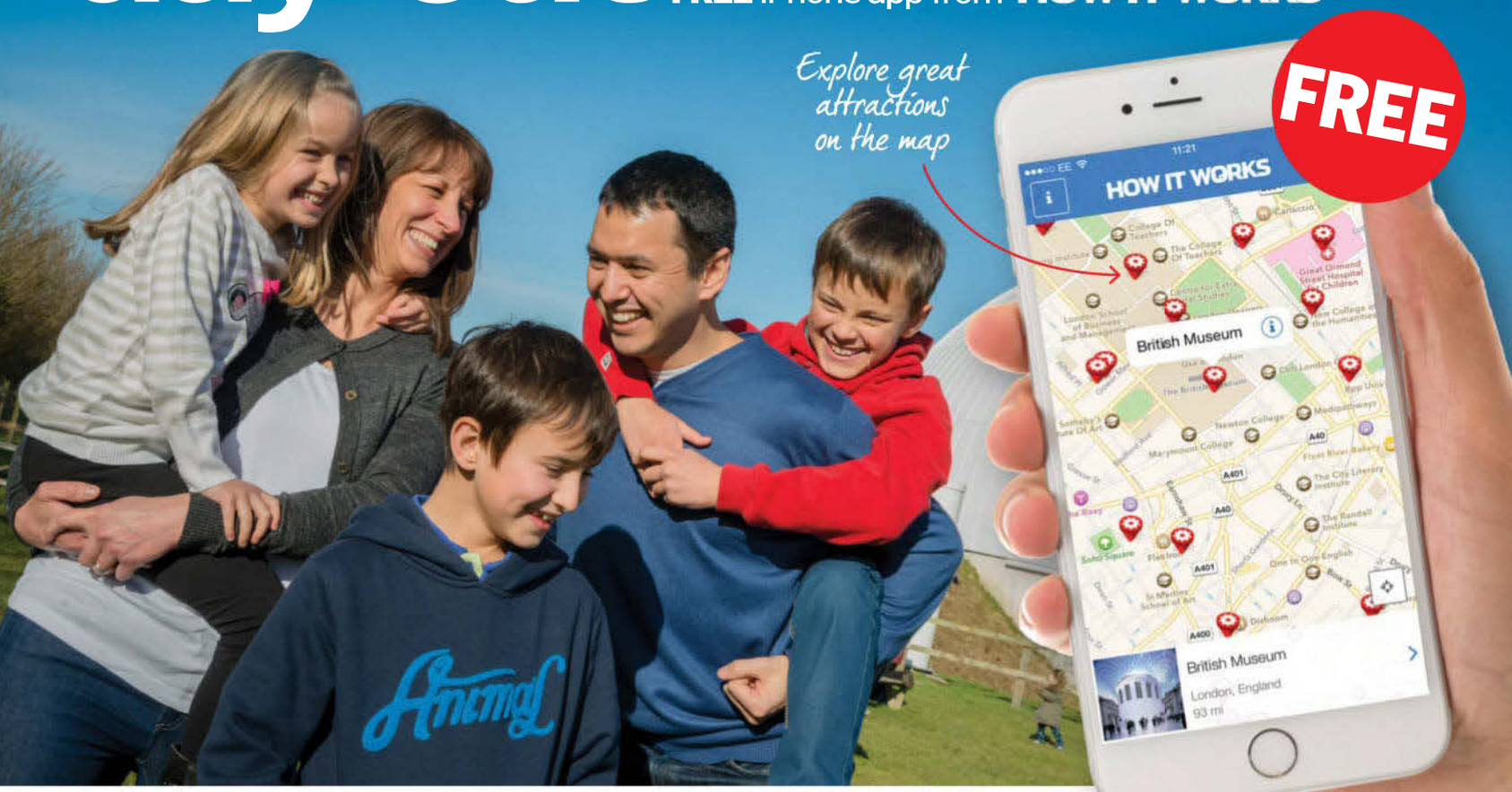
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SciFiNow Reviews

Our thoughts on the pick of the entertainment releases out this month

★★★★★ Outstanding ★★★★ Thoroughly entertaining ★★★ Good but somewhat lacking ★★ Fair at best ★ Avoid as you should *A New York Winter's Tale*



74 CINEMA
Theatrical releases
74 The Divergent Series: Insurgent
75 Tokyo Tribe
75 Cinderella
76 Spring
76 Dark Summer
77 Chappie
78 Glasgow FrightFest

80 HOME/FILM
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81 Rollerball
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82 Mankind's Last Stand
83 The ABCs Of Death 2
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AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE FOUR STARS OR MORE...

74 INSURGENT

SciFiNow Must see now!

"CONTAINS AN OVERABUNDANCE OF REPETITIVE ACTION SEQUENCES"

TRIVIA *INSURGENT* FEATURES THE NEW CHARACTER EDGAR (JONNY WESTON), WHO ISN'T IN THE BOOKS.



THE DIVERGENT SERIES: INSURGENT

Diverging on the ridiculous

FILM INFO

Released
Out now
Certificate
12A
Director
Robert Schwentke
Screenwriters
Brian Duffield, Akiva Goldsman, Mark Bomback
Cast
Shailene Woodley, Kate Winslet, Theo James, Miles Teller, Ansel Elgort
Distributor
Entertainment One
Running Time
119 mins



The second instalment in the adaptation of Veronica Roth's *Divergent* trilogy of YA books delivers more train-jumping antics and teen angst, but it is also a tad underwhelming. This time, Robert Schwentke (*RIPD*) takes a seat in the director's chair, but there's little difference in style between each film.

We enter post-apocalyptic Chicago not long after the events of the first film, where the divergents are now considered a threat to the harmony of society. Jeanine (Kate Winslet) has started a fierce campaign against their kind after finding a special box that can only be unlocked by the strongest divergent. If you haven't read the books by now, it doesn't take a mastermind to figure out that Tris (Shailene Woodley) turns out to be the chosen one.

We meet Tris, Four (Theo James), Caleb (Ansel Elgort) and Peter (Miles Teller) hiding out in the peaceful commune of Amity, which is headed up by the kind but firm Johanna (Octavia Spencer). But it's not long before the action kicks in, with the group having to make a quick getaway when Jeanine (Kate Winslet)'s



Erudite and Dauntless henchmen appear with a new device that can identify a divergent. When the group encounter a rowdy rabble of factionless who look like they've stepped out of New Zealand TV series *The Tribe*, it is revealed that Four's presumed-dead mother (Naomi Watts) is still alive and heading up an underground rebel army.

This instalment also takes the audience into the factions of Erudite and Candor, where we meet Jack Kang (Daniel Dae Kim). The design of each faction's domain is eye-catching, but doesn't make up for the convoluted plot.

There's little urgency behind much of the drama, with it all playing out in a predictable fashion. Tension is missing for the most part due to the fact that whenever anything perilous happens, someone conveniently pops their head through the door at the last minute to save the day. This happens so many times it becomes laughable. The exhaustive action sequences go through the motions, but there are some exhilarating and decently choreographed fight sequences. A scene towards the end which features a flaming, spinning house set-piece adds some much needed poignancy to Tris' narrative.

Insurgent is at its strongest when focusing on Woodley's internal battle against her demons. The extreme violence and upheaval she faced in the first film is taking its toll, and she is forced to come to terms with her grief and overwhelming guilt. Woodley's physical performance is impressive. Whether she's crashing through glass in SIM-built experiences, tangling through her nightmares or taking the next step in her romantic relationship with Four, she's always credible.

Miles Teller adds wit and charm at the start of the film, but his story is regrettably pushed to the backburner, as is Caleb's narrative. It's a shame these characters aren't more fleshed out, as Caleb's decision to turn away from war could have provided a nice parallel to Tris' determined path to aggressive action. Winslet and Watts sadly do little more than spew plot points and information, and the laboured dialogue continually speaks down to its audience, with many of the characters' reactions feeling flat and passionless.

The middle film in a franchise always faces the difficulty of tying up its story satisfactorily, but that's something *Insurgent* actually achieves. The real problem here lies with the underwritten supporting characters and overabundance of repetitive action sequences.

Katherine McLaughlin
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

NEW REVELATIONS

Interesting facts about Veronica Roth's series

The *Divergent* series of books has sold well over 30 million copies to date.

Veronica Roth met actress Octavia Spencer at the Book Expo America, where they were both featured speakers.

The *Divergent* fandom lovingly refer to Shailene Woodley and Theo James as 'Sheo'.

Daniel Dae Kim says that he took on the role of Jack Kang, because he was impressed by Veronica's decision to include an Asian-American character in her stories.

Though set in Chicago, production for *Insurgent* actually mostly took place in Atlanta.

The armoured vehicles driven by the Erudite and Dauntless factions are recently decommissioned troop carriers from Afghanistan.

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Snowpiercer
Bong Joon-Ho's inventive and intense dystopia set on a high-speed train delivers one hell of a ride.

TRIVIA TO AVOID ANY SECRETS SLIPPING OUT ABOUT THE FILM THE WORKING TITLE OF *INSURGENT* WAS CHANGED TO 'MINERAL'.



TOKYO TRIBE Crazy town

Details 18 // 116 mins // 8 May **Director** Sion Sono **Screenwriters** Sion Sono, Santa Inoue **Cast** Tomoko Karina, Akihiro Kitamura, Ryohei Suzuki **Distributor** Eureka Entertainment



The 'Japanese rap musical' sub-genre (expect this to description to show up on Netflix as a category at some point) isn't exactly ripe with obvious cinematic touchstones. Then again, director Sion Sono is arguably best remembered for the four-hour-long *Love Exposure*, so he probably didn't even see it as a risk.

Coming across as *The Warriors* by way of *Battle Royale*, *Tokyo Tribe* presents a dystopian future in which the Japanese capital has become completely overrun by gangs with a penchant for spoken-word melodies. With each gang being forced to stick to their own areas, things take a turn for the bloody when enforcer Mera (Ryohei Suzuki) acts on a grudge against peaceful rival leader Kai (Young Dais).

One of the most intriguing aspects of this curio is the aforementioned 'Battle Rap Musical' description of it. Ultimately, this also becomes its biggest letdown, as truth be told, not a lot of rapping actually happens, save for the start and end. Plus, musicals aren't as good when you have to read everything in subtitles. Sorry, but it's the truth; they just aren't.

Also making things that bit more problematic is the barely disguised undercurrent of misogyny that runs through it. The opening scene sees Mera tracing a map of the Tokyo gangland territories over a topless hostage. With a knife. Both unsettling and hard to watch, it's not the best start to things, especially when the subsequent characterisation of the film's female characters consists of the whole 'empowering through kicking bad men in the gonads' thing, rather than exhibiting any halfway interesting character traits.

The rest of the film is all over the place: *Tokyo Tribe* goes from one extreme to another, making things extremely hard to follow. Supernatural elements like super-strong henchman are thrown in ad-hoc, and tonally it can't seem to decide whether it's serious or not, veering from *West Side Story*-style tragedy and *The Warriors*-tinged bleakness to penis jokes.

There's a halfway interesting movie in here somewhere. Beneath the rampant sexism and borderline schizophrenic mishmash of tones, that is.

Steve Wright
VERDICT ★★★★★

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Warriors
New York's unluckiest street gang comes out to play in Walter Hill's 1979 cult hit.



CINDERELLA True romance

Details PG // 105 mins // Out now **Director** Kenneth Branagh **Screenwriter** Chris Weitz **Cast** Lily James, Cate Blanchett, Richard Madden **Distributor** Disney



The spirit of Disney runs through Kenneth Branagh's latest take on the *Cinderella* story, which plays the fairy tale as straight as possible while embracing the magic and wonder of its animated forebears.

As a teenager, Ella (Lily James)'s father (Ben Chaplin) announces that he's going to marry a widow (Cate Blanchett) with two daughters. When he dies, the full extent of their wickedness is revealed. However, a chance encounter with a charming young prince (Richard Madden) could change everything.

If you're expecting any hint of Grimm's fairy tales, don't. This is 100 per cent Disney; no one's hacking off pieces of their feet here. From the opening frames, it's clear that the most striking element of this *Cinderella* is the visuals. The costumes are stunning, from the step-sisters' eyeball-scorching frocks to our heroine's signature blue dress, and Dante Ferretti's beautiful production design is wonderfully shot by Harris Zambarloukos.



Blanchett's turn is almost as striking. It's nice to see the character given a bit more background and a little (but not much) more cause to resent her stepdaughter. Blanchett seamlessly steers from theatrically coy to vindictively brutal, with a cackle worthy of Boycie from *Only Fools And Horses*.

The rest of the cast is likeable but given less room to play; James is charming, while selling the saintliness, although Madden doesn't have much to do apart from smile in tight trousers. Helena Bonham-Carter has fun playing the Fairy Godmother like a slightly fractured Fifties movie star, while Sophie McShera and Holliday Grainger go big as the stepsisters.

It's charming and pretty, but not especially memorable. It's surprisingly light on laughs, and writer Chris Weitz's reluctance to stray too far from the text creates some lulls. *Cinderella* is likeable enough, but it all feels a little superficial.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Enchanted
Amy Adams' Disney princess is transported to real New York in this wonderful fairy tale twist.

TRIVIA MARK ROMANEK WAS ORIGINALLY ATTACHED TO *CINDERELLA*, BUT LEFT DUE TO CREATIVE DIFFERENCES.



DARK SUMMER

Haunted house arrest

Details 15 // 81 mins // Out now **Director** Paul Solet **Screenwriter** Mike Le
Cast Keir Gilchrist, Stella Maeve, Peter Stormare **Distributor** Content Media



It's been a while since director Paul Solet made his debut with the powerful pregnancy horror *Grace* back in 2009, and this sophomore effort seems to have flown under the radar. Maybe it's because it's hard not to look at the plot synopsis and think "*Disturbia*", a fact the filmmakers are aware of and make explicit reference to very early on. However, *Dark Summer* is worth taking a chance on.

17-year old Daniel (Keir Gilchrist) is put under house arrest for cyber-stalking his classmate Mona Wilson (Grace Phipps). With his mother away and under strict instructions not to go online, Daniel's in for a long, boring summer. Finally, he gives in and logs on, at which point he gets a horrifying message from Mona. He's left with an evil presence in the house that wants to hurt him, and getting out isn't an option.

Dark Summer has an interesting choice of protagonist: a creepy stalker. Mike Le's script doesn't go out of its way to give us reasons to like Daniel – in fact, quite the opposite. He ignores the attentions of his smitten friend Abby (Stella Maeve) and seems incapable of stopping himself from pursuing his interest in Mona. It's up to the watchable Gilchrist to keep us invested in him staying alive and show us that there's more to him than his crime, while Peter Stormare shows up to steal some scenes as Daniel's parole officer.

For the most part, Solet has a single location and a very small cast, and proves capable of finding ways of keeping us on edge. They're occasionally a little on the nose (it's hard to understand why Daniel would have creepy dolls, for example), but he builds an atmosphere of low-key menace that's punctuated by moments of sudden and shocking violence.

It all builds to a series of third-act revelations that are really quite nifty, and patient viewers who've stuck with the film's slow pace are rewarded. Although *Dark Summer* doesn't quite grip as tightly as it perhaps should, it's a horror that finds a new spin on old tropes. There's more going on here than you might think, and horror fans should take a look.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★☆☆



OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Grace
Madeline decides to deliver her baby despite knowing it will be stillborn, with horrifying consequences.



SciFiNow Must see now!

SPRING

People are strange

Details 15 // 109 mins // 17 April **Directors** Justin Benson, Aaron Moorhead
Screenwriter Justin Benson **Cast** Lou Taylor Pucci, Nadia Hilker, Francesco Carnelutti, Jeremy Gardner **Distributor** Metrodome



With their ambitious first film *Resolution*, Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead crafted a nifty and gripping genre thriller out of very little. *Spring* shows the duo working with a little more money and even more ambition.

Evan (Lou Taylor Pucci) is a Californian loner who's reeling after his mother dies. When he needs to get out of the country, he flies to Italy, where he finds himself in a beautiful coastal town and catching the eye of a beautiful girl, Louise (Nadia Hilker). He falls for her, and it looks like she's just as serious about their relationship as he is, but a secret emerges that will change everything for both of them.

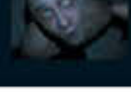
It's very difficult to talk too much about *Spring* without giving anything away. The film starts out very much in the Richard Linklater and mumblecore tradition: unflashy camerawork, naturalistic dialogue, and an aimless hero with an endearing romanticism.

In fact, it's a surprise how funny *Spring* is. Pucci is on terrific form, providing the film with its flawed but big-hearted centre. Hilker plays her beautiful mystery with the same warmth and sense of humour as her co-star, and the longer we spend with them, the more we come to enjoy their company. The question is almost less "What exactly is Louise?" and more "What exactly does this mean for their relationship?"

The filmmakers' determination to keep things this grounded might make *Spring* an acquired taste. While it is fantastical and probably most easily categorised as a horror film, the relationship is always the focal point, even as things get stranger and stranger. *Spring* is a very ambitious – both visually and thematically – second film, but it's totally assured. The duo is walking a tricky path but there's never any sense that this isn't exactly the film they wanted to make. So while there is the occasional misstep (the tricky third act is a bit wobbly), there's so much to admire about *Spring* that this odd, funny and surprisingly sweet horror romance is highly recommended. This is a treat.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★★

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Afflicted
Things turn nightmarish for two American tourists in this excellent found-footage horror.

TRIVIA KEIR GILCHRIST ALSO STARS IN *IT FOLLOWS*, ANOTHER FILM ABOUT AN UNSTOPPABLE EVIL PRESENCE.



CHAPPIE

Enter the black sheep

FILM INFO

Released
Out now
Certificate
15
Director
Neill Blomkamp
Screenwriters
Neill Blomkamp, Terri Tatchell
Cast
Sharlto Copley, Dev Patel, Ninja, Yo-Landi Vi$$er, Hugh Jackman, Sigourney Weaver
Distributor
Sony
Running Time
120 mins



Following his first dalliance with studio filmmaking with *Elysium*, it seemed like *District 9* writer-director Neill Blomkamp had returned to his roots with *Chappie*. A Johannesburg-set story about a police robot given consciousness, *Chappie* feels like it should fit neatly into the 'politically aware near-future action sci-fi with a dark sense of humour' box that we've scribbled Blomkamp's name on. While those elements are present, the film seems to be pulling in different directions.

The Jo-burg police force has successfully deployed Scout robots, designed by Deon (Dev Patel), rejecting the massive, weapons-heavy Moose design created by ex-soldier Vincent (Hugh Jackman). Against the wishes of his boss (Sigourney Weaver), Deon's working on something greater still: an AI programme that will allow the Scouts to think and feel.

Meanwhile, Ninja, Yo-Landi and Amerika (Jose Pablo Cantillo) are in big trouble. They need $20 million in a week or they're dead. Yo-Landi suggests kidnapping Deon to get their hands on the "robot remote", but they end up with something greater: a robot with a mind of its own. Deon tries to nurture the infant-like creation, while Ninja wants him to be "robot gangsta number one!" When Vincent finds out what's going on, everything comes crashing down.



Chappie opens on familiar ground, as news footage and talking heads setting the scene remind us of Blomkamp's previous work, and like Chappie himself, the film is unsteady for the first half hour. There's a blistering early action sequence as we see the brutal efficiency of the Scouts, but much of the scene-setting feels routine, as arguments we've heard in films before about the perils and potential of AI are rattled through. Despite the work of Patel and Jackman, it feels like Blomkamp is just trying to get us to the main event.

Once Chappie is switched on, things get a lot more interesting. The concept of a robot raised by Die Antwoord has always been Blomkamp's pitch for the film, and how well you get on with *Chappie* may well depend on how well you get on with them (we found them hugely watchable). While Deon is established as Chappie's maker and the voice of moral idealism, Ninja is the short-tempered father and Yo-Landi the caring mother. They're fully committed, and their set decoration and costume design make it feel like an extended Die Antwoord video in places. Add in Copley's wonderfully excitable child-like performance ("Chappie's got blings?!?") and this is where the film feels truly original and different. Johnny 5 never got tricked into car-jacking or emotionally blackmailed into committing a heist. As a dark comedy with a surprising emotional core, *Chappie* is brilliant fun.

It's the framing that lets the film down however. Despite the best efforts of the cast, it feels like an afterthought that's obliged to acknowledge influences like *Short Circuit* and *RoboCop*. Deon and Vincent are infinitely more interesting when they're in Chappie's orbit, and it is worth noting that Jackman in particular seems to be having the time of his life as the hard-headed bastard in a mullet and shorts who's determined to utilise as much firepower as possible to get the job done.

Chappie is overlong at two hours and inconsistent, but there's more than enough here to recommend it. It's at its best as an ultra-violent action comedy with a heart and a strangely lovable family at its core, and when they're on screen it feels unpredictable, fresh, exciting and weird. That should be applauded.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

DOUBLE THREATS

Singers-turned-actors

Mos Def
The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy
A lot of things didn't really work in the film, but Mos Def's take on Ford Prefect was perfect.

Tom Waits
Bram Stoker's Dracula
In a film of bad accents and hammy performances, Waits is often overlooked.

Debbie Harry
Videodrome
The Blondie star got dark and weird as Nicky Brand in David Cronenberg's body horror.

Kris Kristofferson
Blade
The country singer got grizzled as Blade's armourer Abraham Whistler, dispensing hard boiled wisdom as needed.

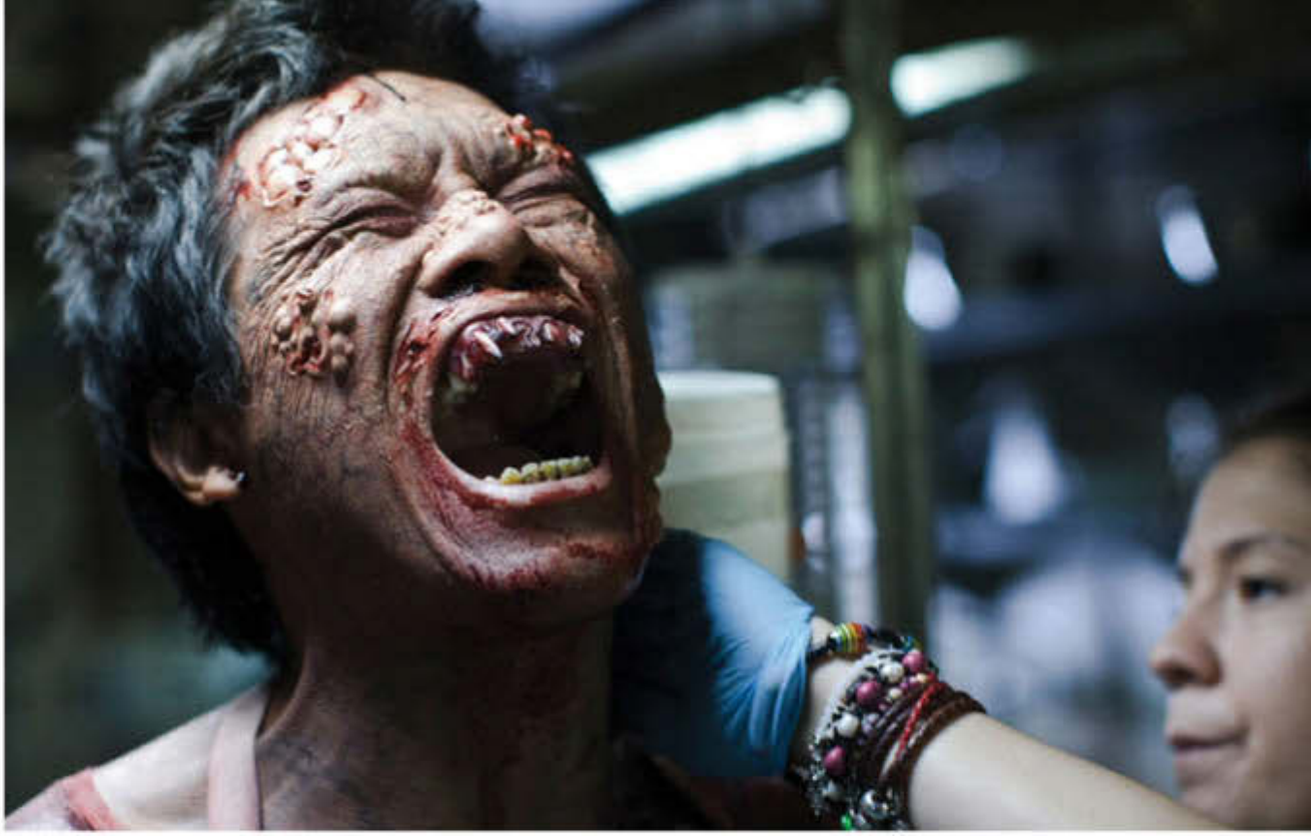
Tina Turner
Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome
Not her finest performance, but the strangeness of her being there is one of its charms.

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



RoboCop
Paul Verhoeven's classic coats its biting social satire in buckets of gore. Make sure it's the original, not the remake.

TRIVIA SHARLTO COPLEY PLAYED CHAPPIE ON SET USING A "POOR MAN'S MO-CAP."



FEST INFO

When
26-28 February

Where
Glasgow Film Theatre, Renfrew Street, Glasgow

TICKETS

Details
Event pass: £70
Single tickets: £9

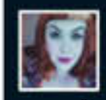
Website
www.frightfest.co.uk

FILMS

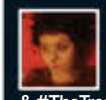
Stonehearst Asylum // The Atticus Institute // The Hoarder // Wyrmwood // 88 // Asylum // Clown // Blood And Black Lace // The Woods Movie // The Treatment // [REC]: Apocalypse // There Are Monsters

YOUR THOUGHTS

We asked you @SciFiNow what your favourite moments were



"Brilliant weekend full of suspense, spooks & scares. Standout films were 88, Wyrmwood, Clown & The Treatment." **@Lovelustloves**



"So bummed #FrightFest is over already! #Wyrmwood & #TheTreatment took the top spots for me this time. See you beautiful nuggets in August!" **@CaveNugs**



"I'm in the minority, but I loved THERE ARE MONSTERS. Late shout for film of the weekend #frightfest #gff2015" **@MitchDiscord**



"Highlights for me were THE TREATMENT and THERE ARE MONSTERS. See you next year! #Frightfest" **@johnlees927**



"Favourites were #Clown & #Wyrmwood! **@johnmcblain**

THE DARK HEART OF CINEMA
FILM4 FRIGHTFEST
GLASGOW
27 - 28 FEBRUARY 2015

FILM4 FRIGHTFEST GLASGOW 2015

FrightFest headed north for its tenth year at the Glasgow Film Festival, and genre fans flocked to see the latest horrors from around the world. From serial killers to homicidal clowns, and zombie monkeys to Blair Witch memories, this was Film4 FrightFest Glasgow 2015...

The festival opened with Brad Anderson (*Session 9*)'s starry *Stonehearst Asylum* ★★★☆☆, an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's *The System Of Doctor Tarr And Professor Fether*. A young doctor (Jim Sturgess) arrives at the remote Stonehearst, where a group of inmates in the basement (led by Michael Caine) tell him that the man calling himself the chief doctor (Ben Kingsley) is in fact a patient. It's an atmospheric, knowing and entertaining throwback to pre-code horrors, although its lack of interest in a central mystery makes it feel a little long at nearly two hours.

The next day kicked off with *The Atticus Institute* ★★☆☆☆ from *Buried* writer Chris Sparling. A mock-doc about a government-confirmed possession in the Seventies, the film makes good use of its format for the first half hour, but it's far too earnest about its extreme silliness. Still, there's a very good performance from Rya Kihlstedt as the possessed woman tortured by a military stooge, and it was definitely better than *The Hoarder* ★★☆☆☆, a British-made, US-set horror in which a bored-looking Mischa Barton is trapped in a storage facility with an apparently monstrous killer. There's some nifty narrative manoeuvres, and Robert Knepper lends some credibility, but this is routine stuff and not recommended.

It was up to much-hyped Australian zombie movie *Wyrmwood* ★★★☆☆ to liven up proceedings. The indie action horror from Kiah and Tristan Roache-Turner is bursting with energy and invention, putting its own spin on the walking dead and combining humour, action and gore to great effect. There's the occasional lull, and not every joke works, but it was lots of fun, and the love letter to Romero, Jackson and Miller went down a treat with the crowd.

This was followed by fractured revenge, with Katharine Isabelle starring in April Mullen's *88* ★★☆☆☆, struggling to reconcile two pasts she can't remember: how is she both a bad-ass killer and a grieving waitress? An overly explanatory opening title card dispels any mystery, and the crime subplot doesn't convince, but Mullen and her co-writer/star Tim Doiron show a gift for ultra-violent slapstick that provides the film with its best moments.

The final film of the night was *The Asylum* ★★★☆☆ (or *Backmask*, or *Exeter*), from director Marcus Nispel. We didn't have particularly high hopes for the latest from the man behind the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Friday The 13th* remakes, but this unpredictable tale of a group of teens who accidentally summon an evil spirit after partying at a burnt-out treatment centre has a sense of humour and self-awareness. With a smart script by Kristen Elms and a game young cast, Nispel hurls a series of gory, ridiculous shocks at the viewer. The final third is a letdown, as the film is forced to find an ending, but it's definitely worth catching.

Saturday started bright and early with Jon Watts' *Clown* ★★★☆☆. The Eli Roth-produced horror about a man possessed by an evil North European clown spirit after putting on an old costume is surprisingly bleak, and all the better for it. When it focuses on the gruesome, tragic body-horror transformation of a loving father and husband it works surprisingly well, but it loses its way in the schlocky second half. The FrightFest crowd was then treated to



Mock-documentary *The Atticus Institute* kicked off the festival.





Australian horror *Wyrmwood* arrived with a lot of buzz.





Wyrmwood proved to be a mixed bag of genre thrills.

Arrow's wonderful restoration of Mario Bava's gorgeous giallo *Blood And Black Lace* ★★★★☆. The tale of a group of models being targeted by a gloved, masked killer (this is a giallo after all) is beautifully shot, has an excellent soundtrack, and it's an excellent early example of the genre that was wonderful to see on the big screen.

Next up was Russ Gomm's *Blair Witch* documentary *The Woods Movie* ★★★☆☆, made up of footage given to him by that film's co-director Eduardo Sanchez. It's very much fans-only, but it's fascinating to see the production come together. It's clearly made by someone who loves it, so there's a noticeable lack of any critical voices, but this is definitely worth a look for anyone with an interest in the *Blair Witch*.

Brutally grim Belgian thriller *The Treatment* ★★★★☆ didn't really fall under **SciFiNow**'s purview. It's an adaptation of Mo Hayder's British bestseller, in which a detective haunted by the abduction of his younger brother by a paedophile facing a horrifyingly similar crime. It's grim but affecting stuff, as director Hans Herbots refuses to shy away from the subject matter.

After that, some zombie monkeys were needed, and zombie monkeys were delivered by Jaume Balagueró's *[REC]: Apocalypse* ★★★☆☆, a continuation of the franchise's move away from high tension terror towards funny, gory thrills. It's more straight-faced than *[REC] 3,* but it is essentially an 'in space' sequel, only on a boat, as survivor Ángela Vidal (Manuela Velasco) finds herself on a quarantine ship where the quarantine doesn't last long. It's not as scary as the first film, but still an entertaining crowd-pleaser.

The final film of the festival was also our favourite. Jay Dahl's *There Are Monsters* ★★★★☆ is an incredibly scrappy found-footage movie that is essentially a *Body Snatchers* update, as told by a devotee of David Wong's weird urban-legend paranoia. A group of film students realise that people around them are acting strangely, but is it too late to stop whatever's happening? The film breaks all the found-footage rules, as well as plenty of its own plot ones, but it's inventive, funny and genuinely scary. It seemed to split the audience down the middle, but we had a brilliant time with it.



[REC]: Apocalypse provided another solid instalment in the series.





TRIVIA *WYRMWOOD* TOOK FOUR YEARS TO MAKE, AS THE CREW WERE ALSO WORKING FULL-TIME JOBS TO PAY FOR THE PRODUCTION.

PREDESTINATION

No fate but what we make?

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 15 // 98 mins // 2014 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** The Spierig Brothers **Cast** Sarah Snook, Ethan Hawke **Distributor** Signature Entertainment



The Spierig Brothers' time-travel tale didn't get the love it deserved on its cinema release, but *Predestination* will almost certainly find its audience. The makers of *Daybreakers* swap the gore for cerebral thrills as Ethan Hawke's driven Temporal Agent hunts a serial bomber through time. But how does The Unwed Mother (Sarah Snook) fit into all of this?

The Spierigs show confidence and skill handling this complex but engaging story, and they continue to show a tremendous visual style. The sci-fi trappings are merely the setting for a stunning central performance from Sarah Snook (*Jessable*), who immediately grabs the viewer's attention and makes an incredibly challenging part her own. There's solid work from Hawke and Noah Taylor, but watching Snook's character's painful journey through a life determined by others is what makes *Predestination* so compelling and affecting.

Some leaps of faith are required, and one or two twists are too signposted, but it's all about Snook.

Jonathan Hatfull

VERDICT ★★★★☆



LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE

Sweets to the sweet

Details 15 // 101 mins // 1992 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Alfonso Arau **Cast** Lumi Cavazos, Marco Leonardi, Regina Torné **Distributor** Arrow Films



This festival favourite from 1992 gets a loving restoration, which is appropriate given our put-upon heroine Tita (Lumi Cavazos)'s repeated mantra: make it with love. She is the youngest of three daughters and destined to spend her life as a spinster caring for her mother (Regina Torné). Pedro (Marco Leonardi) is madly in love with her, and decides to marry her sister in order to be close to her. As the years pass, their passions only deepen.

Based on the novel by Laura Esquivel, this endearing magical realism fable has such a big heart it's easy to overlook the occasional clunkiness. As Tita toils away in the kitchen making meals that alter the moods of those who eat them, the viewer is swept along by this melodramatic, often overwrought, but decidedly likeable film.

Cavazos is wonderful in the lead, while Leonardi has the right blend of brash idiocy and real tenderness. Special mention goes to Torné, who is splendidly evil as the bitter Mamá Elena.

Jonathan Hatfull

VERDICT ★★★★☆



THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW

SciFiNow Must see now!

In dreams, I walk with you

Details 18 // 94 mins // 1988 // Blu-ray // **Released** 20 April **Director** Wes Craven **Cast** Bill Pullman, Cathy Tyson, Zakes Mokae, Paul Winfield **Distributor** Fabulous Films



It's fair to say that Wes Craven's output between *Elm Street* and *Scream* is patchy, but this decidedly free adaptation of Wade Davis' story is a definite high point.

Superstar anthropologist Dennis Alan (Bill Pullman) is sent by an American pharmaceutical company to Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, to investigate reports of zombie-fication. The locals seem to be able to induce a death-like state that leads to the victim being buried alive. Teaming up with doctor Marielle Duchamp (Cathy Tyson), Dennis attempts to separate myth from reality while staying one step ahead of the fascist local police.



Davis reportedly sold the rights to his story on the condition that Peter Weir direct and Mel Gibson star, and it's not difficult to see why he wanted the *Year Of Living Dangerously* team. The tumultuous political background of Haiti keeps the tension high; Craven clearly enjoys flexing his thriller muscles, and Pullman is an excellent lead, unafraid to appear out of his depth.

The closer Dennis gets to the truth, the more terrifying things get. You could almost forget the film's a horror until the halfway point when he finds out just how powerful the voodoo is, and Craven goes full throttle. Reality and nightmares blur as Dennis' visions of the grave become more and more vivid. There is no safe place, no hiding from the powers of the evil chief of police (a splendidly horrible performance from Zakes Mokae).



There are occasional clunky moments that haven't dated well, but Craven is sensitive enough to avoid most of the usual pitfalls of establishing a foreign country as a place of horrors or exotic wonders. The real-life horrors do take a backseat to Dennis' own ordeal in the film's second half, but Craven keeps the audience aware of what's going on outside the hunt for this new anaesthetic, regularly undercutting our hero's American swagger with the reminder that people are suffering on the other side of the wall. *The Serpent And The Rainbow* is every bit as chilling as it ever was, and by the time Pullman delivers the film's tagline, it has you by the throat.

Jonathan Hatfull

VERDICT ★★★★☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Carnival Of Souls

Dreams and reality blur for Mary Henry with terrifying consequences in this stone cold classic.

TRIVIA THE CREW RELOCATED FROM HAITI TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC DURING FILMING DUE TO POLITICAL UNREST



ROLLERBALL

It's not a game

Details 15 // 116 mins // 2014 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now **Director** Norman Jewison
Cast James Caan, John Houseman, Maud Adams **Distributor** Arrow Video



Part science fiction dystopia, part hyper-violent extreme sports satire, *Rollerball* goes hand-in-hand with fellow Seventies sleeper hits like *Soylent Green* and *Westworld* in the way it presents an otherwise recognisable familiar world that has been subtly tweaked and thus rendered utterly unimaginable.

Featuring Jonathan E (James Caan), the star of the titular sport (a hellish cross between roller derbies and American football, with added motorbikes and fatalities) who attempts to circumnavigate the sinister corporations' attempts to force him to retire – which become more pronounced the more obstinate he gets. Confused at their determination to make him back down, Jonathan instead tries to delve into the background of the world-controlling corporations, with destructive results for all concerned.

Like a lot of its Seventies kin, *Rollerball* has a lot to say, but doesn't always pick the best way of expressing it. Starting out as a straightforward action movie (set to the score of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, which would later come to be used to great effect in the rugby match scene in *Monty Python's The Meaning Of Life*), it eventually segues into one man's fight for truth and freedom. The result, then, is rather an uneven piece of filmmaking.

That said, one of the appealing things about *Rollerball* is how it avoids succumbing to a lot of the action-movie clichés that its kin did. Jonathan isn't presented as a messiah figure, reluctant or otherwise; he's just a man trying to play ball. Similarly, on repeat viewing it has aged relatively well. The game sequences were produced without the aid of special effects for the most part, the result being that they continue to look suitably authentic and brutal.

Most films involving extreme sports have one eye on bloodlust and the other winking at the audience. *Rollerball* is neither; entirely serious about the point it has to make and totally unamused by the whole prospect of doing so.

Steve Wright
VERDICT ★★★★☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Logan's Run
The polar opposite of *Rollerball*, facing its dark subject matter with a big wide grin.

THE REMAINING

A good day to try hard

Details 15 // 88 mins // 2014 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Casey La Scala
Cast Johnny Pacar, Shaun Sipos **Distributor** Sony Pictures Home Entertainment



The Remaining is a weird one. It is marketed as a horror/thriller, but it's not horrible enough to be a horror or thrilling enough to be a thriller. It doesn't really know what it wants to be.

When a young couple's wedding reception is interrupted by a worldwide reckoning and guests start dropping dead for no reason, things go terribly awry. Friendships are broken, people are sacrificed and the human population start to question its devotion to God.

On a technical level, *The Remaining* is sound. The effects are sound, the acting is sound and the writing is, again, sound. But 'sound' is only good enough when it's also entertaining. The story plays out like a mid-season episode of *Supernatural*. It's an interesting idea, but ultimately one that's been done again and again. It's predictable, and somehow manages to try too hard and not try hard enough simultaneously. It's more or less what you'd expect from a low-budget 'horror' with a giant demon skull cloud on the DVD sleeve.

Poppy-Jay Palmer
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆





THE SAMURAI

Dressed to kill

Details 15 // 79 mins // 2014 // DVD // **Released** 16 April **Director** Till Kleinert
Cast Michel Diercks, Pit Bukowski, Uwe Preuss **Distributor** Peccadillo Pictures



Till Kleinert's The *Samurai* draws on the burgeoning sexuality of Angela Carter's fairy tales to create a rich and hypnotic dream-like arthouse chiller. Outsider and small-town cop Jakob (Michel Diercks) finds an intense, dress-wearing young man (Pit Bukowski) who has come into possession of a katana and is determined to wreak havoc.

Kleinert has crafted a beautifully shot fairy tale, exploring repressed sexuality through this gorgeous, atmospheric and darkly funny fable. It doesn't strictly operating within the realms of the everyday, and the town itself seems to expand and contract, while the titular samurai Jakob is chasing is both physical and a manifestation of his id. The confines of the village have pushed Jakob into a role that nobody seems particularly convinced by, and the gleeful anarchy the Samurai brings puts him on a compelling journey.

As things draw to a bizarre but wonderful conclusion, *The Samurai* draws you into its odd, half-Lynchian, half *Company Of Wolves* dreamscape completely. This is excellent.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★★☆



TRIVIA *ROLLERBALL* WAS THE FIRST MOVIE TO GIVE FULL SCREEN CREDITS TO STUNT PERFORMERS.



THE BOGEY MAN

Loose fragments

Details 18 // 82 mins // 1980 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now **Director** Ulli Lommel
Cast Suzanna Love, Ron James, Nicholas Love, John Carradine **Distributor** 88 Films



The Seventies and early Eighties were a fascinating era for horror. It provided an avenue for tackling narratives and matters of human nature that other genres would struggle with.

There is nothing rote about *The Bogey Man*. A product of several years' fascination with supernatural demon-possession horror thrillers after 1973's *The Exorcist* became one of history's biggest box-office hits, *The Bogey Man* follows the story of two siblings, Lacey and Willy. As a boy, Willy was abused by his mother and her lover, which ended in him stabbing said lover in the back, in his mother's bed. Lacey has never gotten over the trauma, and Willy has remained mute ever since.

20 years later, Willy (Nicholas Love) still lives with his now-married sister when a letter from their mother arrives, setting events in motion to try to rid Lacey (Suzanna Love) and Willy of their childhood-induced chains once and for all. After that, things get a bit weird, as per Eighties horror tradition.



Emphasising lingering dread over jump scares is a smart move by director Ulli Lommel, as not only does it help conceal the lack of financial resources, but also makes it hold up better to age than it otherwise would.

Another strong point is that most of the film is actually an interesting study on the lingering effects of child abuse on both the victim and the people connected to them. Nicholas in particular deals well with not having any dialogue to rely on, using only his expressions and physicality as support, while Suzanna is hit-and-miss in her more melodramatic portrayal.

No HD glossing can hide the fact that most of the second half of *The Bogey Man* is an unmitigated mess, however. An underdeveloped supernatural element appears out of the blue, with strange and broken logic surrounding a broken mirror, along with badly dated death sequences and jarring editing. It almost completely undermines an otherwise atmospheric build-up, leaving *The Bogey Man* an attraction for cult horror fans only.

Erlingur Einarsson
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Possession
Isabelle Adjani and Sam Neill shine in Zulawski's bizarre Berlin-based 1981 cult horror exotica.

HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW HOOKERS

Subtlety be damned

Details 18 // 75 mins // 1988 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** Out now
Director Fred Olen Ray **Cast** Jay Richardson, Linnea Quigley, Gunnar Hansen
Distributor Camp Motion Pictures



The greatest movies rely on a balance of emotions and styles. Comedy and horror, for example, occupy two opposite ends of a spectrum, but both have their place in cinema if handled with precision and delicacy.

Unfortunately, there is nothing subtle about 1988's *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers*, a classic for most of the wrong reasons. Jack Chandler (Jay Richardson) is a private investigator who's tasked with finding Samantha (Linnea Quigley), a teenage girl who's seeking revenge on a cult of prostitutes who have murdered her friend. As the pair discover, this cult worships chainsaws, and are led by Gunnar Hansen from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*.



The plot may be frankly laughable, but it's only to be expected from the title. The acting too is lacklustre and the dialogue poorer still, but it doesn't take itself too seriously, making Black & Decker jokes and hamming up the gore. After all, it was only ever meant to be seen as a tongue-in-cheek, silly slasher movie.

Mark White
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

MANKIND'S LAST STAND

Lone survivors

Details 15 // 88 mins // 2014 // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes // **Released** 20 April
Director Jabbar Raisani **Cast** Adrian Paul, Rick Ravanello, Reiley McClendon
Distributor 037 Films



Throwing a new twist on a dystopian, alien-featuring thriller and trying to make it thought-provoking is becoming increasingly difficult in Hollywood, especially considering directors like Neill Blomkamp have cornered the market in recent years.

Mankind's Last Stand is centred around a documentary team joining Outpost 37 to capture footage of an alien attack. It's different to your average alien-attack flick; as it joins the story towards the end of a war, it has the atmosphere of a war movie. It feels impressive for such a low budget, though the relatively unknown cast bring the quality down with poor acting.



It's not exactly destined to be a huge hit, but *Mankind's Last Stand* boasts incredible visuals, from the aliens themselves to the setting of Outpost 37, courtesy of director Jabbar Raisani, who provided the special effects on *Game of Thrones* and *Fantastic Four*. It's subtle and intriguing, and ultimately more than just a run-of-the-mill action movie.

Mark White
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

TRIVIA ULLI LOMMEL DIRECTED DAVID CARRADINE IN *ABSOLUTE EVIL* AT 73 YEARS OLD, 29 YEARS AFTER DIRECTING HIS FATHER JOHN IN *THE BOGEY MAN* AT 74 YEARS OLD.

THE ABCS OF DEATH 2

Lesson learned?

Details 18 // 125 mins // 2014 // Blu-ray · DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Various
Cast Various **Distributor** Monster Pictures



In the anthology horror family, *The ABCs Of Death* felt like the hyperactive younger sibling of the V/H/S franchise. The latter had cool mumblegore directors and viewers fainting at Sundance. *ABCs* had some of those guys too, but came with an self-conscious swagger that meant the really impressive work came hand in hand with titles like 'F is for Fart' or Ti West's flippant 'M is for Miscarriage.' This sequel seems to have grown up a bit.

Things get off to a decent start with EL Katz's 'A is for Amateur', while Julian Barratt's short is about as silly as you'd expect from 'B is for Badger'. Several rely on punch lines, which doesn't pay off for Rodney Ascher's 'Q Is For Questionnaire', but Marven Kren's 'R Is For Roulette' delivers an unexpected emotional wallop. Juan Martinez Moreno's 'S Is For Split' is one of the few genuine scares and hits its mark, but the final twist is too clever for its own good.

Vincenzo Natali's 'U is for Utopia' is forgettable, but Larry Fessenden's 'N is for Nexus' blends hand-held visuals with impending doom. Julien Maury and Alexandre Bustillo's 'X Is For Xylophone' is a nicely chilly effort starring Béatrice Dalle, but it feels like they didn't push themselves too far.

Big Bad Wolves duo Aharon Keshales and Navot Papushado's 'F Is For Falling' brings a rare human element, while the Soska Sisters' 'T Is For Torture Porn' is a raucous blast of gleeful madness, and the duo pop up in Steven Kostanski's mostly-funny toy advert 'W Is For Wish.'

Chris Nash's closer 'Z Is For Zygote' is an intriguing and upsetting body horror, but best of the bunch is Robert Morgan's animated short 'D Is For Deloused', as the Clive Barker-esque stop-motion film is genuinely unsettling.





This is an entertaining follow-up for those who enjoyed the first film, that's more consistent with fewer standouts. There's enough good solid fun here for genre fans to take a look, but you don't need to rush.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★☆☆

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



V/H/S/2
***The Human Centipede 2*'s Laurence R Harvey cameos after the credits watching 'T For Torture Porn'.**

EXISTS

Feet of fury

Details 15 // 81 mins // 2014 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Eduardo Sanchez
Cast Dora Madison Burge, Chris Osborn, Brian Steele **Distributor** Entertainment One



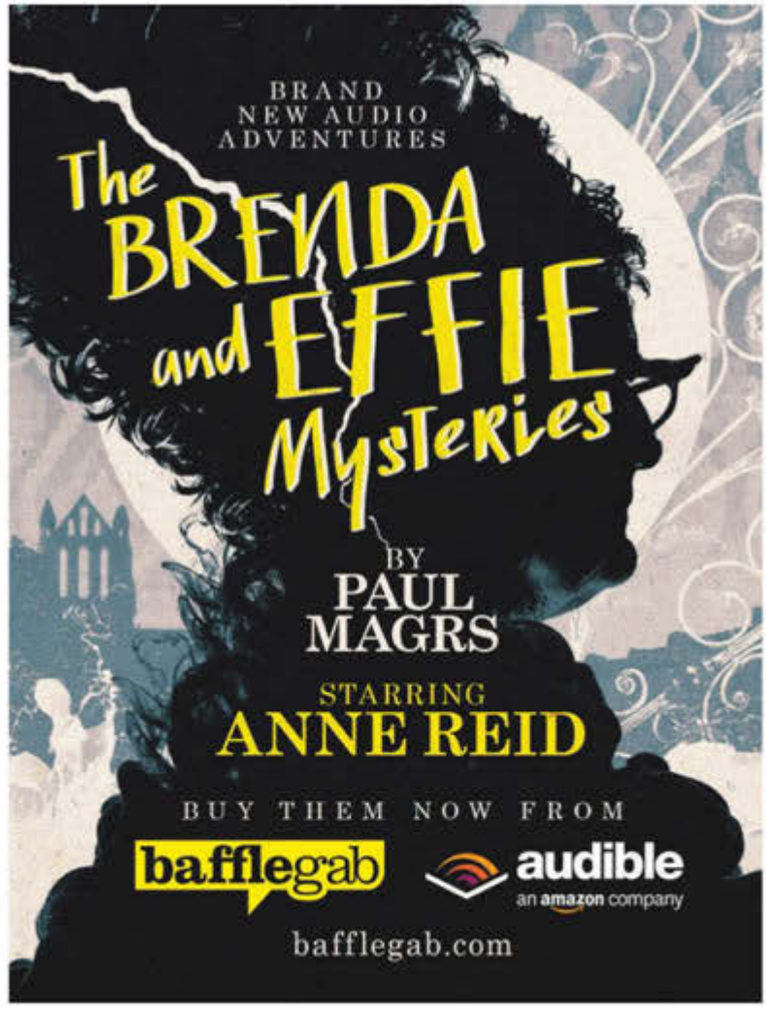
Blair Witch Project co-director Eduardo Sanchez returns to the woods and found footage with this entertaining, energetic take on the Bigfoot movie. A group of friends travel to a cabin in the woods for a getaway. However, funny Sasquatch rumours turn out to be true and they find themselves fighting for their lives.

Sanchez's work on V/H/S/2's *A Ride In The Park* seems to have been good preparation for these Go-Pro horror adventures, and there's a real sense of fun as he shows what he can do with the tech. Then things get surprisingly brutal surprisingly quickly, as Bigfoot (Brian Steele) starts tearing the place apart.



Exists moves very quickly at a trim 77 minutes and Sanchez is clearly determined to keep the adrenaline pumping, as lulls are punctuated by the hairy figure bellowing and storming towards our heroes. It works better in some places than others and there's very little in the way of plot, but it's got a sense of humour, the cast are likeable, and when Sanchez puts his foot on the accelerator it's pretty thrilling stuff. Sanchez previously stated that the driving force behind *Exists* was to create a kick-ass Bigfoot movie and it works. Just remember to turn the volume up loud.

Jonathan Hatfull
VERDICT ★★★☆☆



STAR WARS: IMPERIAL ASSAULT

Publisher: Fantasy Flight Games // Players: 2-5 // RRP: £79.99

Star Wars fans have been spoiled recently, with great games in the form of *Star Wars: The Card Game* and *Star Wars: X-Wing*. You can now add the rather brilliant *Imperial Assault*, which is effectively an evolution of *Descent: Dark Corners Of The Earth*, to the list.

The components of Fantasy Flight Games are always impressive, but the company has outdone itself. Models are highly durable and detailed, capturing the essence of the characters they are based upon. The included modular tiles are also well constructed, and cover a range of different environments that ensure plenty of different options during play.

The game itself plays similarly to *Descent*, so one player will play the evil Galactic Empire with a near limitless army, while the others control a single character from the rebel alliance. The base characters, ranging from wookies to Jedi, and are well fleshed out with numerous cool abilities, and are extremely well balanced.

1 BOARD
The modular board pieces are of high quality and are double-sided, allowing the action to take place in a number of environments.

2 CHARACTERS
All the models are of a superb quality and exceptionally well detailed. The AT-ST in particular is a thing of beauty.

5 MISSION CARDS
Story Missions and Side Missions must be completed during the Campaign Mode.

4 DEPLOYMENT CARDS
These are used by the Imperial player, who is enabled to place enemies on the board.

7 TOKENS
There are a large number of tokens used in-game, which cover everything from damage to strain and different debilitating conditions.

Characters like Luke Skywalker aren't playable, instead being used as allies in the game.

On each turn, players have access to a number of actions, like moving, attacking, interacting or using special abilities. It's also possible to rest, which restores any lost strain and endurance points that are expended when using the aforementioned actions. You can also upgrade characters using experience points, making them even more powerful.

The player controlling the Galactic Empire has similar actions, but also gets to use a variety of cards that range from Deployment cards to Agenda cards. Agenda cards require Influence points, which are received when the player completes certain objectives. There are also Class cards, which are used by each side, as well as Supply, Item and Reward cards, which grant additional bonuses when used.

The most impressive aspect of *Imperial Assault* is how much content it offers. In addition to the core campaign, which consists of 30 missions and side missions, it also includes 'Skirmish Mode', a separate points-based system designed for two players. The rules are a little complicated, but it all adds up to one of the best interpretations of the *Star Wars* universe yet.

BEST FOR: ACTION FANS



SUBSCRIBE WWW.IMAGINESHOP.CO.UK

TOP FIVE MAGIC: THE GATHERING - MAGIC 2015



1. NISSA, WORLDWAKER £20



2. GOBLIN RABBLEMASTER £14



3. GARRUK, APEX PREDATOR £13



4. PERILOUS VAULT £11



5. LILIANA VESS £10

The X-Files

Publisher: IDW Games // **Players:** 2-5 // **RRP:** £49.99

The X-Files is a fun but relatively simple board game that pits popular agents Mulder and Scully against the Cigarette Smoking Man and his network of organised crime.

Agents take it in turns to visit different parts of America in an attempt to solve the cases that is found there. Each case requires a specific amount of Investigation Tokens before it can be closed. Once closed, players draw Evidence Tokens from a mystery bag. When a number of Evidence Tokens based on the participating players have been retrieved, they can be traded in for a piece of Mulder's 'I Want To Believe' poster. The agents win when they retrieve all nine pieces.

The player controlling the Cigarette Smoking Man starts his turn by drawing an Evidence Token for each unsolved case. Whenever he draws from the bag he leaves cigarette tokens, which are dead draws to any agents that pick them up. The CSM also receives Influences Tokens, which he uses to buy cards that can slow the agents down in a number of ways. Once he retrieves 25 Evidence Tokens he wins the game.

Although it's well themed (all the cases are from the first three seasons of the show) *The X-Files* will be a little too simplistic for most gamers due to its very basic turn structure. It's best saved for casual gamers or big fans of the show who want to collect all the *X-Files* related memorabilia that they can.

BEST FOR: CASUAL GAMERS



Alchemists

Publisher: CGE // **Players:** 2-4 // **RRP:** £29.99

A game about creating potions sounds really boring, but that's not the case with this clever offering from CGE. *Alchemists* combines two different genres (deduction and worker placement), and does so extremely well.

Players take it in turns to do anything, from forage for ingredients to drinking potions, testing theories and buying artefacts. Much of the game's main thrust comes from working out what ingredients are used to create potions. While CGE has included a complex Deduction Grid for this purpose, it's more fun if you use the unique app that has also been created for Android and iOS devices to run alongside the main play. The deduction side of the game is admittedly tricky to get your head around at first, but it soon becomes second nature, allowing you to concentrate on what areas of the game board will help yield the most points at the end of the game.

Creating potions is great fun, and it's highly satisfying once you work out the required components. Finishing the game is simple; once six rounds have been completed, the player with the most points wins.

The complex rulebook and sheer amount of options available each turn will no doubt scare newer board gamers, but once you get your head around *Alchemists*' clever gameplay, you'll discover a highly satisfying and original board game. Perfect for those who always wanted to be a wizard.



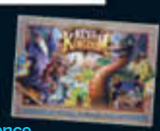
BEST FOR: STRATEGY FANS

Expansion Of The Month
CYCLADES: TITANS

Publisher: Asterion Press // **Players:** 3-6 // **RRP:** £33.99

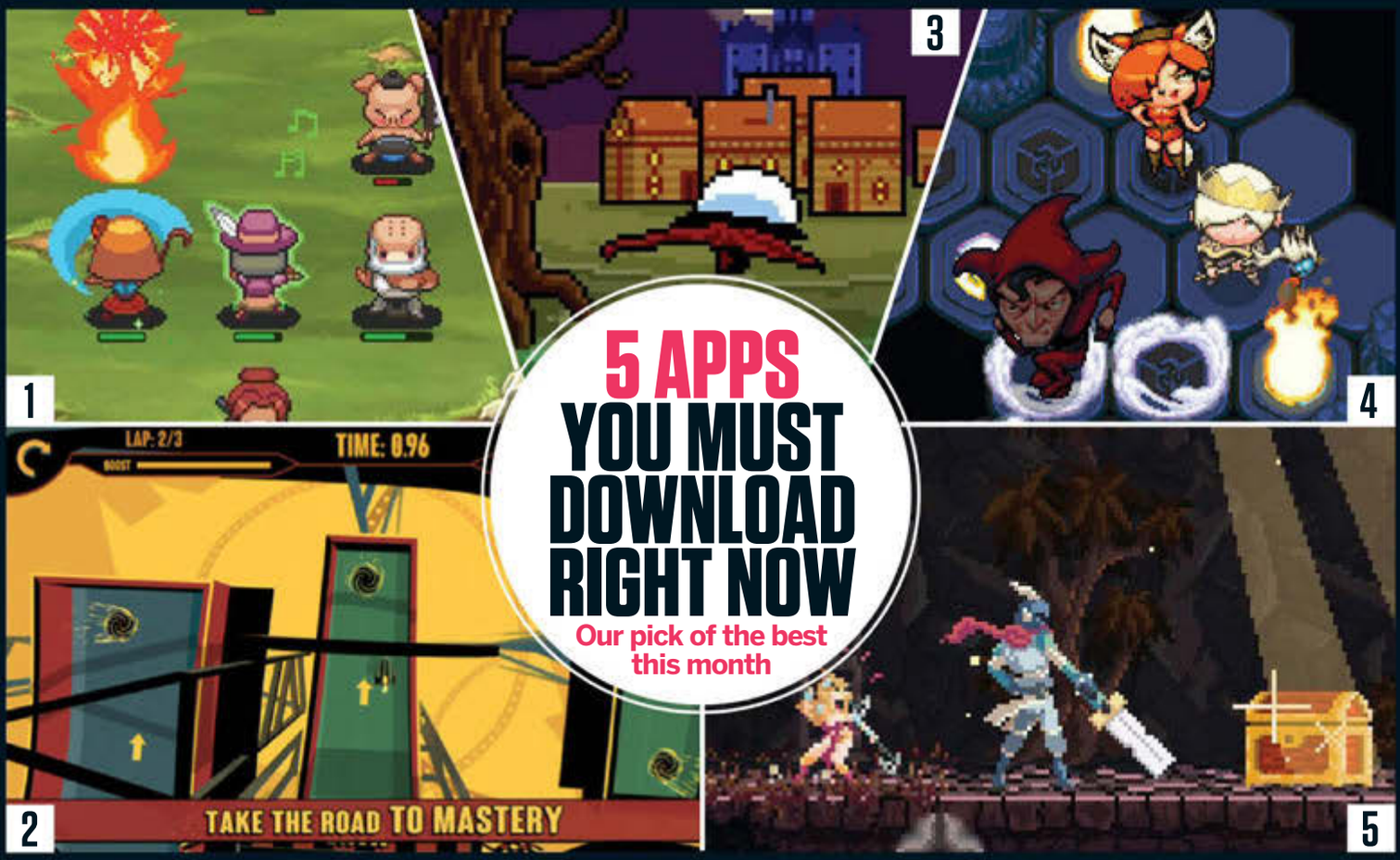
Titans is a solid expansion pack that introduces a sixth player, team-based play, new god Chronos, and the Titans, powerful new monsters that will greatly power your armies. Ultimately, the gameplay of *Titans* is largely the same as before, so you're bidding against others to use the unique abilities of the available gods while expanding your army and crushing your opponents. There are also Divine Artefacts, which give you unique bonuses that greatly bolster your chances of winning. The new board gives you far more options during play, which speeds up the game. *Titans* is a refined expansion with the same Greek theme that dramatically improves the original game.

Do You Remember?
KEY TO THE KINGDOM



Dungeons & Dragons without the licence

Key To The Kingdoms was published by Waddingtons in 1990, and is best described as a light family adventure game. Paul Bennett created it after being disappointed with a purchased copy of *Dungeons & Dragons*, and created something that didn't require the same level of effort. As a result, the game sees you trundle around the beautifully illustrated board, looking for the fabled key while battling monsters and gaining magical items. Hazards are also found, while whirlpools open up the game board, giving you even more options during play. Ultimately, you couldn't leave the kingdom until you had found both the key and a specific piece of treasure, meaning there was a fair amount of backtracking. But the game was so fun the additional trekking didn't really matter.



5 APPS YOU MUST DOWNLOAD RIGHT NOW

Our pick of the best this month

SWAP HEROES 2

PRICE: £2.49/$2.99
FOR: IOS/ANDROID



1 The original *Swap Heroes* was pretty fun but quite flawed. *Swap Heroes 2* is its new and improved counterpart. Everything you loved about it is still here, but better and more gorgeous, with a playful 16-bit style. It's addictive and fast-paced and works as a fun pick-up-and-play, but the RPG element means you also have to strategise. Form your own party of heroes and guide them through quests and battles before a final showdown with the evil Shadow Knight.

BEST FOR: HERO COMPLEXES



CAVA RACING

PRICE: £1.49/£1.99
FOR: IOS



2 Fans of platform racing games will love this fun and unique space racer. *Cava Racing* isn't your average racing game; you are in control of a spaceship. The 2D perspective to the art style and the retro colour palette make a nice change, and the Game Centre leader board and a variety of unlockable tracks and ships mean you could well play for hours without it losing an ounce of its entertainment value. Best of all, it is frantic and exciting, because there are no breaks!

BEST FOR: SPACE RACERS



LAMP AND VAMP

PRICE: £1.99/$1.99
FOR: IOS/ANDROID



3 With vampire hunters lurking in the shadows, vampires find it more difficult to get back to their coffins for a good day's sleep. Playing as a tired vampire, you find your way back to your home before morning. It sounds simple, but a daily routine turns into a near impossible quest between hunters, priest and more that want to put a stop to your kind, and the fact that the sunlight is lethal to vampire skin. Not being seen is the name of the game.

BEST FOR: VAMP SYMPATHISERS



AURO: A MONSTER-BUMPING ADVENTURE

PRICE: £2.29/$2.99
FOR: IOS/ANDROID



4 This brand-new app comes with a new kind of gameplay called 'bumping,' which is just as ridiculous as it sounds. The aim is to guide a spoiled Joffrey-wannabe through a network of dungeons. Use a combination of strategy and magic to slay monsters by sneaking up and bumping straight into the bastards. That's literally all there is to it. It's an example of fun fantasy rogue-likes at their finest.

BEST FOR: BUMPING FANS



COMBO QUEEN

PRICE: £1.49/£1.99
FOR: IOS



5 *Combo Queen* is perfect for hack-n-slash fans who are fed up of playing as huge, rippling and hairy men and delicate, impractical pixie women. Plough through this high-speed RPG hybrid runner as Queen, killing monsters, playing minigames and a unique combo and parry system. The pixel art is gorgeous, the story is enthralling and the game is virtually endless. It's pretty easy to get the hang of, but it takes skill and dedication to truly master.

BEST FOR: COMBO QUEENS



SciFiNow Book Club



Issue 107's Essential Read: From Hell by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell

Join in and share your thoughts on Twitter or Facebook

88 Essential Read: Jurassic Park 92 Beginner's Guide: Christopher Priest 94 Book Reviews 100 Clive Barker 104 Todd McFarlane and more

Essential read: Jurassic Park

Before Chris Pratt, before the Spinosaurus and before Steven Spielberg, Jurassic Park was simply a book. With Jurassic World set to devour us all, it's time we returned to where it all began...

WORDS **MATTHEW HANDRAHAN**



SYNOPSIS

In a world propelled by relentless technological progress, palaeontology is starting to look like a dying art. At least that's how it feels to Dr Alan Grant, a veteran of the field who can scarcely find funding for a dig. Then the answer choppers in from out of the sky in the form of billionaire geneticist John Hammond, who wants to pay Grant and his colleague, Ellie Sattler, to accompany him on an island retreat.

Only this is no ordinary island. Isla Nublar is a tourist attraction in the making; a theme park inhabited by living dinosaurs. For Grant, realising his dream would be more pleasurable if the 'dream' didn't have such enormous goddamn teeth and a hungry look in its eyes. And that chaos theorist rambling about how everything is about to go disastrously wrong isn't helping. Events take a turn for the dangerous as Hammond's experiment goes horribly awry.

If you had even a passing interest in cinema in 1993, you may recall spending hours in a vast, snaking queue for the chance to see Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*. In those days, before the internet afforded us simple luxuries like efficient advance ticketing systems, you could wait for hours and still be greeted with the announcement that the screening was full. It was utterly barbaric, but it had one upside: at that time, you felt part of something. You could feel the excitement. *Jurassic Park* was more than a film. It was an event.

But before all of the frenzy, the merchandise and the groundbreaking CGI, *Jurassic Park* was just a book. As the years roll by and another sequel looms large on the horizon, the fact that this phenomenon started in the pages of a novel is in danger of being lost. Michael Crichton sold 150 million books in his lifetime, which should be as near to a guarantee of immortality as any author could hope to achieve. And yet there was something transient in the nature of his work, a tendency to draw upon contemporary ideas and events that anchored his books in their time. As such, the final legacy of his most famous book may yet prove to be Chris Pratt racing velociraptors on a dirtbike.

To fans of Crichton's work that might seem like sacrilege, but from a certain perspective it makes perfect sense. *Jurassic Park* was actually the script for a potential film; one that, ultimately, didn't work out, but even when he turned his ideas into a novel, Hollywood was on high alert. Crichton pitched the concept to Spielberg while they were working on *Cold Case*, the TV series that would eventually become *ER*. *Jurassic Park* was the hottest sci-fi film in town before the first copy had even left the printing press, and that was

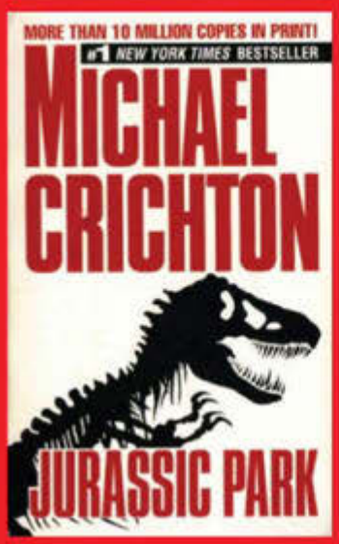


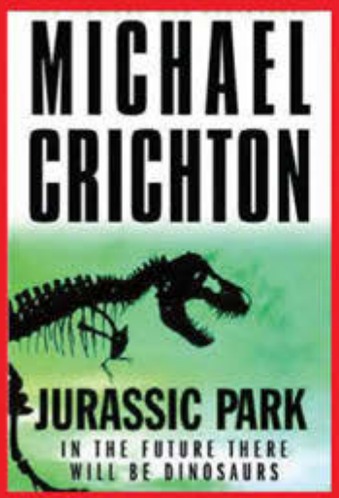
Author Michael Crichton was nearly put off of being a writer altogether.



Sam Neill as Dr Alan Grant, who starred in both the original film and it's second sequel.







entirely by Crichton's design.

But it would be a mistake to diminish Crichton's skill as an author. Like so many writers, as a boy he had an unusually clear sense of where his life should take him. His father was a journalist, so the link between writing words and earning his keep was natural, but he also enjoyed the process more than anything else his young life had to offer. He wrote for his school magazine, and covered sports for the town newspaper. After a family holiday to Arizona, he submitted an article to the *New York Times* travel section. It was successful. By the age of 14, Crichton had received a pay cheque in exchange for a few hundred words.

"I was the weird kid who wrote extra assignments the teacher didn't ask for," he later wrote on his website. "I just did it because I liked writing so much. I was tall and gangly and awkward, and I needed to escape, I guess."

Crichton began his studies at Harvard College in 1960, but his desire to take English was foiled by a tutor who met every one of his efforts with a C+ grade. He suspected him of harbouring a grudge, so as an experiment he plagiarised an essay by George Orwell and submitted it. The tutor failed to spot the ruse, but slapped the work with a B- anyway. Incensed and disillusioned, Crichton switched his focus to biological anthropology and, after graduating summa cum laude in 1964, enrolled at Harvard Medical School.

On the face of it, the decision to study medicine at such a prestigious institution was a sign that Crichton's aspirations to be a professional writer had been snuffed out. And yet, it was the prohibitive cost of Harvard Medical School that forced him to rediscover his talent. Faced with oppressive tuition bills, in 1966 Crichton turned to, "the only thing I knew how to do." Channelling the spirit of Ian Fleming's popular James Bond novels and writing under the pseudonym 'John Lange', he wrote pulpy thrillers during breaks from his studies. Eventually, he got the entire creative process down to ten days.

"It was great training for a writer," he later recalled in an video interview. "The whole idea was to write something that wasn't original, that wasn't an expression of me… It was just intended to be something that people would want to read. The publisher wouldn't even send it to me for changes, because by that time vacation was over and I was back in the hospital… By the time I started writing under my own name I had none of the anxieties that writers usually have."

The first book published under the name Michael Crichton would define both his meticulous style and congenial relationship with Hollywood. Crichton drew on the knowledge he had gained as a medical student and the populist sense fostered by his Lange novels to create a story about an attempt to contain a deadly virus. *The Andromeda Strain* was his most ambitious work up to that point, and yet when he submitted it to his editor, Bob Gottlieb, he was offered some brutal advice – rewrite the entire thing.

"I rewrote it completely. [Bob] called me up and said, 'Well this is good, now you only have to rewrite half of it,'" he said in an interview with *The Paris Review*. "What Bob actually said to me was that he thought the manuscript should be factually persuasive, like a *New Yorker* piece… Finally I began to think about what I would do if the story were real. Suppose this had actually happened and I were a reporter, what would my book look like?

"As soon as I began to do that, it became clear to me that the author of a non-fiction account would not have the access to the characters' innermost thoughts in the way that you assume for fiction. So I began to take all that stuff out and make the book colder and more impersonal."

The late Sir Richard Attenborough played the brilliant, if slightly mad, John Hammond.



Your Take On The Classic

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW


"Well I'm relying on my memory of reading it on a family holiday to Achill Island in 1992, but if I recall correctly – terrible." **@EmmetOC_**


"It was well written with engaging characters, technical detailing and great science exposition #chaostheory" **@FamilyGar**


"Excellent, as good as film is they missed out on some scenes Crichton brought to the page" **@Pugzly101**


"An amazing book! Very scary compared to the film! Very gripping, I read it in a day!!!! Those raptors...*shivers*" **@spencymos**


"Fantastic book, not read it in ages but I really enjoyed it. In fact, I might dig it out and have another read, you've inspired me" **@Greedo420**


"Solid story. Character development was real and engaging. The action and drama was intense. Best parts didn't make the movie" **@RealJacobQuinn**


"I read the book when I was quite young and keep coming back to it. I discover new things every time" **@DeanoBurner**


"Awful. Good ideas, wooden prose, cardboard characters; a film treatment, at best" **@rpachter**


"Read it some years ago coz I always loved the film, more proof that books are better than film counterparts" **@hunkyostrich**


"I've read no other book as often as Jurassic Park. 27x. It's why I'm a scientist and why I write. It's basically directed my life" **@REMGS**


"The mini elephant, Lex's little Dinofriend and its sacrifice. The beginning of an amazing franchise!" **@Mike333West**


"Loved the tech bits but really loved the grittier ending" **@indianamulder**

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

Whatever reluctance Crichton felt, it evaporated when *The Andromeda Strain* was published in 1969 to strong reviews and sales. Not long after, Hollywood came calling with a $100,000 cheque, and Crichton's work received its first film adaptation. The pieces were in place, and by the time *Jurassic Park* was published in 1990 he could imagine no other way of writing. "I'm not interested in a distinctive style," Crichton said to *Entertainment Weekly* that same year. "Because I deal with technical information, the highest goal I aspire to is clarity. I don't really care if it's graceful."

That adherence to clarity came at the expense of florid technique, and deliberately so. Not all of Crichton's stories take technology and science as a starting point, but the few that don't are still extrapolated from some kernel of reality. He shares a lot with authors of sci-fi, even if he wouldn't count himself among them. Where Crichton departs from most practitioners of the genre is the way he regards the ideas and themes that form the basis of his fiction: with respect, sure, but underpinned by scepticism and outright fear.

This is evidence of conservatism regarding technology, but that represents a misreading of Crichton's worldview. In his fiction, technology is not depicted as bad or good, but the humans that wield it are, almost without exception, flawed. When Crichton said that genetic engineering had the potential to cause more damage than nuclear weapons he was talking about the engineers, not the bombs.

"Do people have any idea what we're dealing with?" he said to *Entertainment Weekly*. "Do they think nature is some very complicated but ultimately comprehensible mechanical system, and there are just a few details left to work out, so why don't we go ahead and do any damn genetic thing we feel like? I think that's suicidal. If you think radioactive milk from Swedish cows after Chernobyl is frightening, wait until some idiot decides to make a plant virus to improve the cocoa leaf, and it wrecks all the planet's chlorophyll because he made a mistake."

Jurassic Park is a demonstration of that fear, though it didn't start out that way. Initially conceived for cinema as the story of a lone medical student who clones a Pterodactyl from fossilised DNA, Crichton shelved the concept when he couldn't imagine a believable context where such a discovery would be made, "there is no pressing need to create a dinosaur." Eventually, though, a credible scenario emerged: entertainment, a theme park where dinosaurs serve the same purpose as rollercoasters. If humanity were to unlock the potential of genetic manipulation, it would be for its own pleasure. Hubris would be our downfall.

"Biotechnology and genetic engineering are very powerful," Crichton said in a 1993 interview with *Newsweek*. "The [story] suggests that [science's] control of nature is elusive. And just as war is too important to leave to the generals, science is too important to leave to scientists."

And that's exactly where John Hammond's plan to recreate a lost world starts to fall apart. Not because of the



Dinosaurs most certainly ruled Earth, and the park when they rampaged through the park.

plans of the dinosaurs, scheming to bring the park's security to its knees just in time for dinner. Crichton's prose views these ancient creatures with the same mix of admiration and awe as his protagonist, palaeontologist Alan Grant. No, the problems begin and end with the island's human inhabitants, who are rendered blind by greed, self-interest and the lure of fame. The spectacle of a velociraptor chasing down its prey left an indelible impression on millions of readers, but it would be a mistake to think that Crichton intended the human beneath its claws to be seen as the victim. Like so much science fiction, he demands that the reader look beyond his talent for thrillingly high concepts and engage with what lies beneath.

"If you're going to do a dinosaur book, people must be munched," he said to *Newsweek*. "You know going in that some of your characters are dino fodder – it's a dirty job, but some characters have to do it. The munches are just there to keep the reader going. The ideas in *Jurassic Park* are much more important."

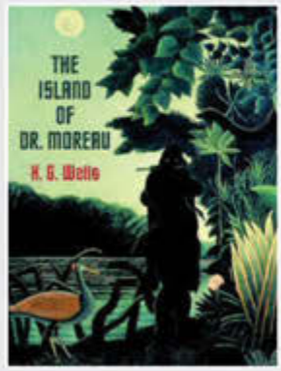


Where Have I Seen This Before?

BAD SCIENCE

THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU

It feels wrong, somehow, to place HG Wells' strange novel alongside Crichton's wilfully dry take on science fiction, but in many ways *The Island Of Dr Moreau* was the *Jurassic Park* of its day. Both feature mad-men wielding cutting-edge science like a toy gun, the fruits of their dubious labour thankfully confined to remote islands.



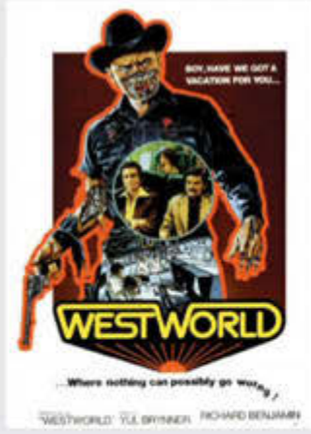


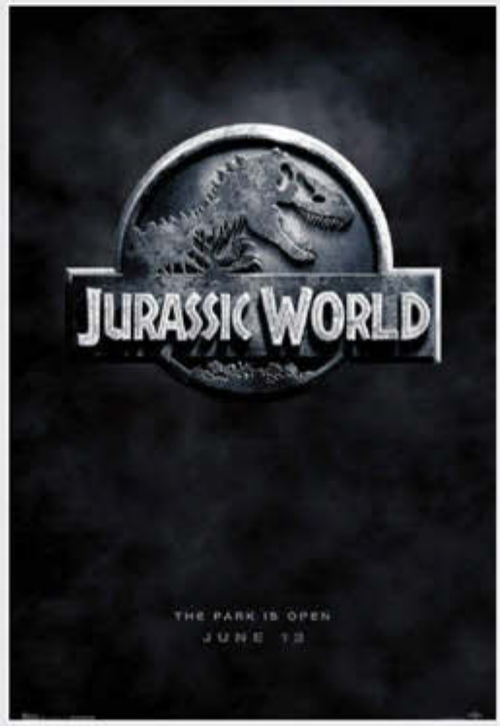
THE LOST WORLD

Arthur Conan Doyle was one of Crichton's favourite writers, and no single work of Doyle's so closely matches *Jurassic Park* as *The Lost World* – which is not to say that they are all that similar, of course, only that they both feature strange islands on which dinosaurs reign supreme. Crichton even borrowed the title for the sequel, which also made it into a less-acclaimed film.

WESTWORLD

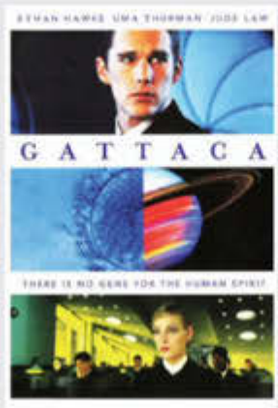
Michael Crichton wrote a great many films, including several adaptations of his own novels and Jan de Bont's *Twister* – no, really. But one of his earliest jobs in Hollywood was this 1973 movie, in which androids in a futuristic amusement park turn on the paying customers. Swap the robots for dinosaurs and you have the bones of *Jurassic Park*.





JURASSIC WORLD

So nobody has actually seen the fourth *Jurassic Park* movie yet, but we have a shiny pound coin that says you've seen the trailer, and have squared away the ticket money, even if you've never seen its predecessors. If that's the case, see *Jurassic Park* immediately. If you're fully up to date, tread carefully: *Jurassic World* could be another *Jurassic Park III*.



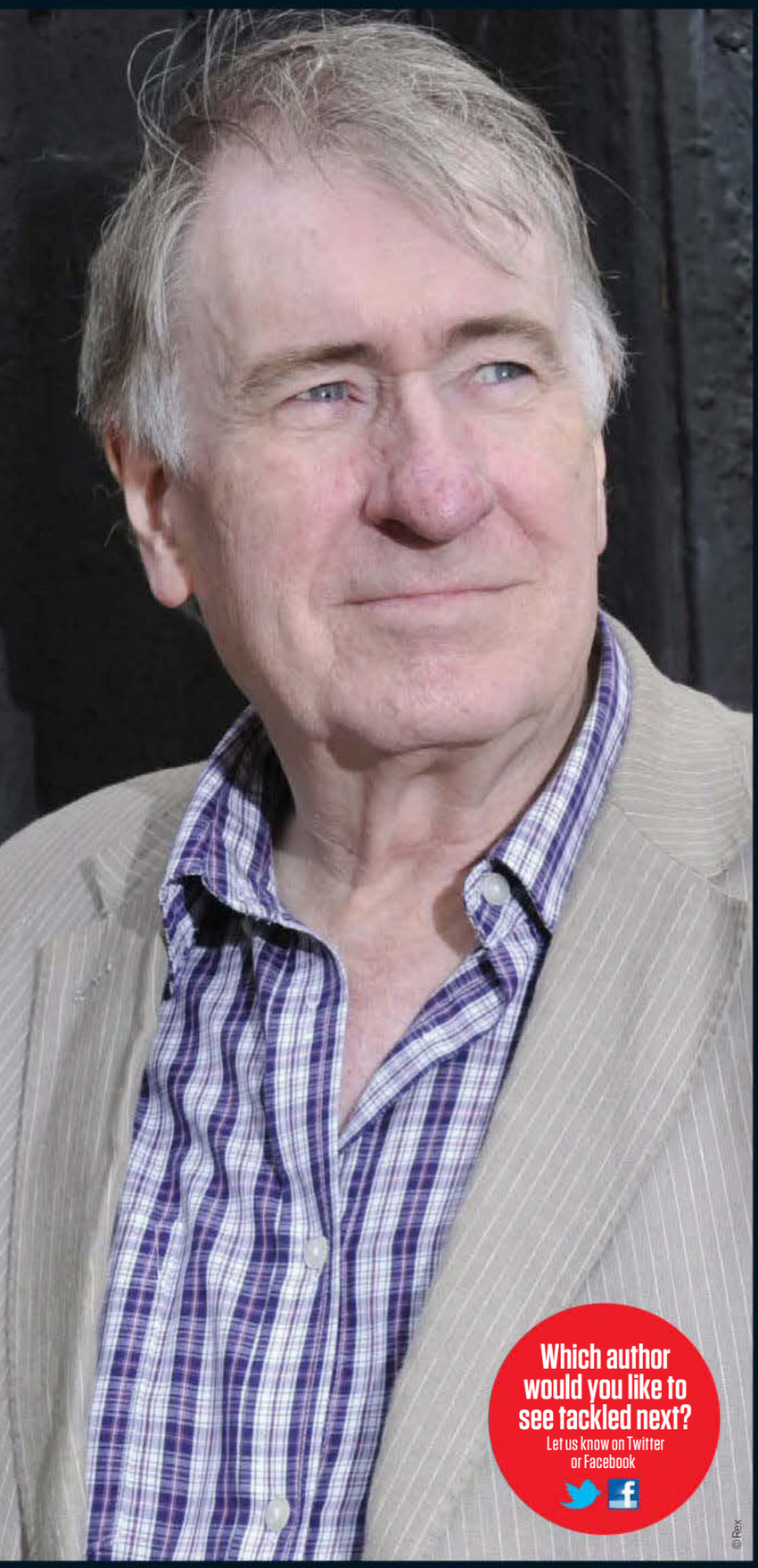
GATTACA

The enormous box-office success of Steven Spielberg's film triggered a brief fascination with genetic engineering in Hollywood. Andrew Niccol's *Gattaca* is by far the most accomplished work to emerge during that period, plunging into the far murkier depths of human genetics and eugenics, and emerging with a great deal of credibility.

CARNOSAUR

Jurassic Park was one of the first novels to explore the possibility of dinosaurs in the modern world through the lens of real science. Now, Harry Adam Knight's *Carnosaur* has no real interest in science, but it did feature a zoo full of dinosaurs six years before Crichton's novel was published. Frankly, it ain't that great, and Roger Corman's 1993 film version is awful.





A Beginner's Guide To Christopher Priest

Prepare to be amazed! Look beyond what you see with a master of illusion WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

Christopher Priest has been sowing his unique seeds in the science fiction literacy world since 1970. His first novel, *Indoctrinaire*, was a leap of faith on publishing house Faber's part, who commissioned it based on an outline. The book is now out of print in English, but Priest's later work is still as popular as ever.

Though Priest was an established name in the world of science fiction literature, his work generally stayed just within the boundaries of its confined science fiction audience until 2006, when Christopher Nolan's film adaptation of 1995's *The Prestige*, Priest's World Fantasy Award-winning novel, brought it into the mainstream. The film featured a cast of big names, with Hugh Jackman as aristocratic magician Robert Angier, Scarlett Johansson as his lover and assistant Olivia Wenscombe and Christian Bale as working-class illusionist Alfred Borden. The film deviated somewhat from the book's plot, but Priest still supported it, describing Nolan's work as "an extraordinary and brilliant script, a fascinating adaptation of my novel" – he wasn't quite so kind about Nolan's later work on *The Dark Knight* trilogy. Both the film and the book were structured in the same way as magic acts, consisting of three parts: the pledge, the turn and the prestige. Nolan was reportedly so concerned about keeping the denouement a surprise for the audience that he squashed all plans for a lucrative tie-in edition of the book.

Many of Priest's stories focus on the ideas of delusion and alternate realities. His sixth novel, *The Affirmation*, tells the tale of a traumatised man who gets suddenly flipped into a delusional world and voyages through a chain of exotic islands called the Dream Archipelago. Priest considers it his 'key' novel, insisting that all his books before *The Affirmation* lead towards it, and none that come after could have followed without it. The Dream Archipelago features in a fair few of his short stories, collected in *The Dream Archipelago*, which has raised debate as to whether the islands are just fantasy or actually exist.

Which author would you like to see tackled next?
Let us know on Twitter or Facebook

© Rex



Nolan asked the cast not to read *The Prestige* before filming, but Bale did anyway.



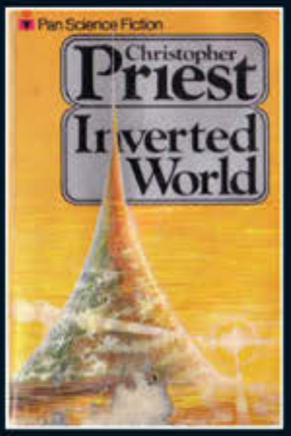
Hugh Jackman and Scarlett Johansson starred in Christopher Nolan's 2006 film adaptation of *The Prestige*.

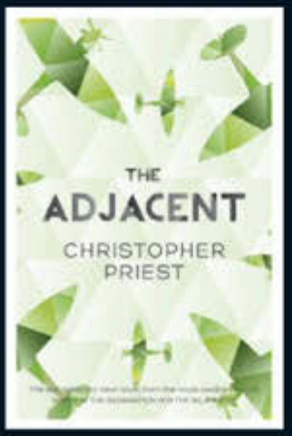


Christopher Priest thinks Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy is pretentious and boring.











A kind of magic

One dream, one soul, one prize, one goal

THE PRESTIGE
Publisher: Simon & Schuster
Published: 1995
Price: £8.99

The art of illusion is the focus in Priest's most famous novel *The Prestige*: the setup, the performance and the effect. When it was first released, the novel was a huge hit with both readers and critics. It was nominated for a number of awards, and ended up taking home the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for best fiction and the World Fantasy Award. But the book slipped into obscurity until 2006, when the Nolan brothers adapted the story into a film starring Christian Bale, Hugh Jackman and Scarlett Johansson.

"I read *The Prestige*, after having loved the Christopher Nolan film. Really enjoyed it!" **@ElliottFinn**

Two visions

Is this the real life, is this just fantasy?

THE EXTREMES
Publisher: Simon & Schuster
Published: 1998
Price: £8.99

Priest's BSFA award-winning novel *The Extremes* blurs the lines between make-believe and reality. When Kingston City, Texas, and Bulverton, England are both rocked by mysterious massacres, ex-FBI agent Teresa Simons takes it upon herself to find out if they are connected. While dealing with the death of her husband, Teresa uses her FBI training to enter the world of virtual reality and determine if they were really coincidental, in the process making some horrific discoveries.

"Strange, always involving different levels of reality and consciousness. Part of the PKD, Ballard Phylum." **@rmltpie**

Long away

Adventures in space and time

INVERTED WORLD
Publisher: Faber & Faber
Published: 1974
Price: £8.99

The opening sentence, "I had reached the age of 650 miles," has become one of the most famous in SF literature. Priest's third novel takes us on a journey, exploring the relationship between time and space. Helward Mann lives in a city called Earth, which is slowly being winched along towards the ever-mysterious 'optimum' on four railroad tracks. After venturing out of the city, Helward's reality becomes warped, and he soon realises he doesn't know as much about his home as he thought he did.

"Picked it up at a car boot sale – couldn't put it back down. #BookClub" **@Dummackin911**

Picture this

The photographer, the pilot and the physicist

THE ADJACENT
Publisher: Gollancz
Published: 2013
Price: £8.99

Priest's most recent novel crosses between parallel realities and universes to tell the story of a widowed freelance photographer from Anatolia 100 years into the future, a stage magician-turned-WWI soldier serving on the Western Front, a female RAF pilot who escaped from the Nazis and a present-day theoretical physicist. The unnerving and unique tale challenges the reader to think beyond the past and future, and see a story from different perspectives. Priest uses his own brand of trickery to create a thought-provoking read.

"I really enjoyed it for its bravery amongst other things. #BookClub" **@ianjsimpson**

Space race

The space war of the worlds

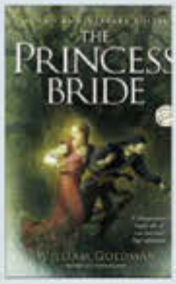
THE SPACE MACHINE
Publisher: Faber & Faber
Published: 1975
Price: £4.99

As the vice-president of the international HG Wells Society since 2006, Priest gets a lot of inspiration from Wells' work. *The Space Machine* is sort of like a tribute to Wells, as it is essentially a space opera mash-up of *The War Of The Worlds* and *The Time Machine* that brings the two tales into the same reality. Set both in Victorian England and on Mars, the machine from Wells' novel can now travel not only in time but also in space. Critics praised Priest for embodying the HG Wells style that sci-fi fans know and love.

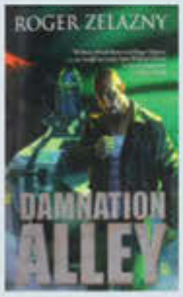
"Love it. Great book. I rather lousily hadn't read either HG Wells books though before reading it so. fail. #bookclub" **@meowy24**

Your Five Companions

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE @SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



1. Westley
The Princess Bride
"Westley from *The Princess Bride*. He's got his wits about him."
@thewildlestsea



2. Hell Tanner
Damnation Alley
"Gotta be Hell Tanner from Roger Zelazny's *Damnation Alley*! Accept no substitute!"
@filmthug



3. Logan Ninefingers
The Blade Itself
"Logan Ninefingers 'The Bloody Nine' is pretty handy."
@Lancashire Mouse



4. Harry Dresden
Storm Front
"Harry Dresden. He is resourceful, never loses and does have that big stick."
@Cascararogue



5. Roland
The Gunslinger
"Roland from *The Gunslinger*. Just because."
@BeccaMorgs

Details **Author:** Peter Newman **Publisher:** Harper Voyager **Price:** £14.99 **Released:** 23 April

THE VAGRANT

A cocktail of classic sci-fi lit

SciFiNow Must read now!

It's the sign of a good story when, with one word, it can strike a sense of fear into the reader's heart. *The Vagrant* is one of these rarities, which manages to build a subtle but powerful neurosis around the word 'infernal'.

The story follows an unnamed hero, the vagrant himself (one of the last of the Seraph Knights), as he attempts to deliver the only weapon that could save humanity. It's the infernals, however, that are attempting to thwart the vagrant's attempts – a growing race of reanimated corpses or possessed humans filled with the essence of the Usurper, an enemy that's building its own army to overthrow humanity.

Peter Newman's debut novel is incredibly well written, with eloquent, concise and almost poetic language that really brings the story to life. The narrative leaps predominantly between two perspectives, both told from our unnamed vagrant's point of view – the current day, while he makes his journey to the Shining City, carrying only the bare necessities, a baby, and an infamous sword – and the younger vagrant, up to eight years before he began his treacherous journey, giving the reader a slow, gradual sense of history. However, the occasional insight into our enemies' minds provides a deeper context, which really adds meat to the bones of the story.

Perhaps the most appealing aspect of the book is that it seems solidly built on the foundations of Newman's imaginary world. Much like *The Lord Of The Rings*, *The Vagrant* has a rich and diverse world that's thoroughly plotted out. While the worlds are nowhere near as deep and explored as in JRR Tolkien's epic trilogy, and there's no featured map with which to visualise the lands, *The Vagrant*'s world is easy enough to follow through the narrative of the story.

It's surprisingly easy to compare it to many of the classics within the canon of sci-fi literature. Channelling the best of classic sci-fi, Newman's captured the post-apocalyptic atmosphere of *The Handmaid's Tale* and merged it with the expansive world of *The Lord Of The Rings*, resulting in a John Wyndham-like novel with a fantasy twist.

Unfortunately, not everything is perfect with *The Vagrant*. Much like the classics that it's readily comparable to, Newman's story requires a real commitment. In particular, two of the story's biggest enemies – the Usurper and the Uncivil – are easily confused, and it's only halfway into the novel that you really get to see the difference.

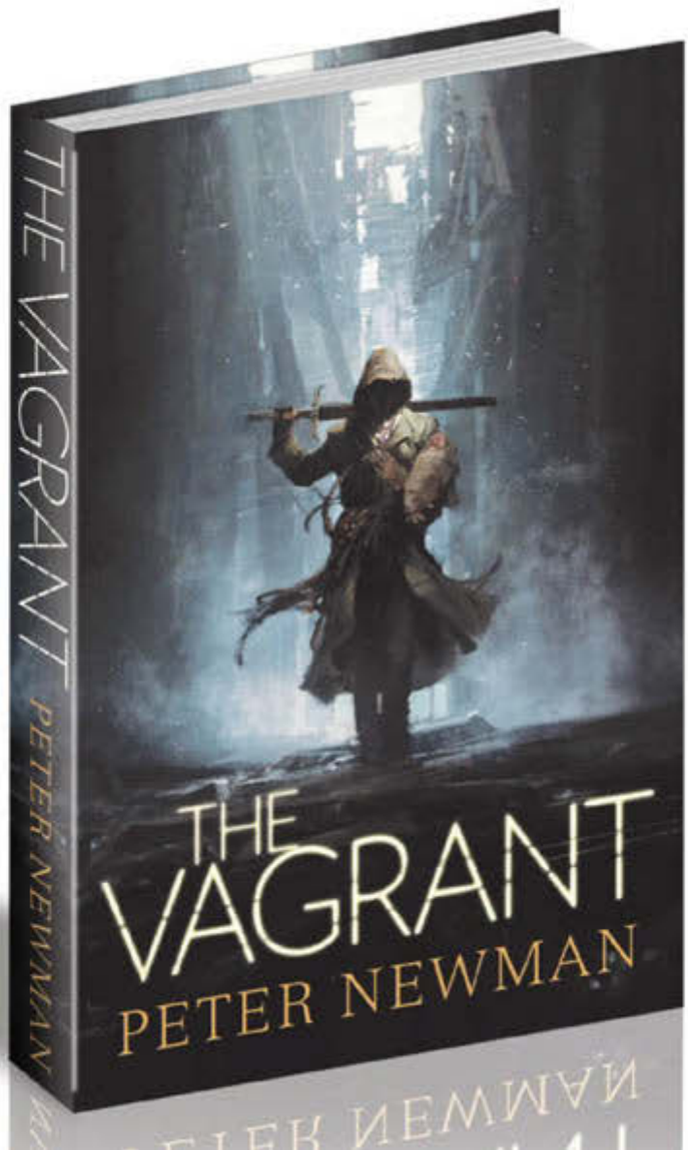
On top of this, the novel ends somewhat abruptly, leaving its finality open to question. It wasn't particularly clear whether there's room for sequels, or whether the closing chapter marked the end of the story – full stop. It's a jarring ending, but thankfully it doesn't mar the memory of the rest of the novel.

Any faults are easily overlooked, however, as *The Vagrant* really is a compelling read. For fans of classic science-fiction literature, this is a must-read, and with such a captivating first novel, Newman is undoubtedly an author to keep a sharp eye on.

Philippa Grafton

VERDICT ★★★★★

"NEWMAN'S DEBUT NOVEL IS WELL WRITTEN, WITH AN ELOQUENT, CONCISE AND POETIC LANGUAGE"





IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Death Of Grass
John Christopher
In a world ravaged by a virus, food is scarce and the morals holding society together begin to crumble.

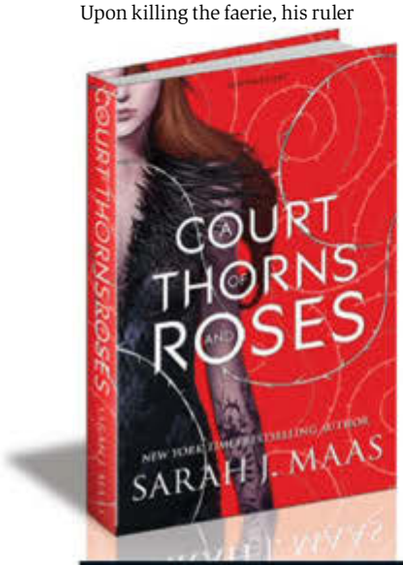
Details **Author:** Sarah J Maas **Publisher:** Bloomsbury **Price:** £7.99 **Released:** Out now

A COURT OF THORNS AND ROSES

A prickly start

Kicking off with pace, protagonist Feyre is introduced while hunting in order to fend for her family. After stumbling across a wolf she also believes to be faerie she, despite knowing the consequences, fires an ashen arrow, killing the beast.

Ironically, it's here that the narrative slows down somewhat. Upon killing the faerie, his ruler appears to claim Feyre; offering her the option of either a slow, painful death or a life of freedom and luxury living in his kingdom.



Here, you learn more about Feyre – though never the correct pronunciation of her name – in the process determining her flaws and likeability. At times, an almost teen-like attitude slips through – as evidenced in instances when she proclaims to hate feeling like a disobedient child, despite sneaking into an event she was told to avoid, but most will let moments like this slide in favour of her independence and bravery.

It's no spoiler to reveal she falls for her captor Tamlin and, as the couple, along with his wingman Lucien, share extravagant meals and in-jokes, you may begin to wonder if there could be much more to the remaining half of the book.

Fortunately, it turns out that there is. When the – admittedly far-fetched – cure to the curse over the Spring Court is revealed, Feyre embarks on a frantic mission to tackle antagonist, Amarantha.

Although proving to be somewhat theatrical in nature with regards to her malice, scenes of gore and torture aren't spared here, and readers will feel her pain as she is put through hell in order to free Tamlin.

The conclusion is a funny one, featuring a transformation that took the *Twilight* four books to make, but one that doesn't really end on a significant enough cliff-hanger to make us think that this lends itself to a second instalment, despite the fact that this is apparently the first part of a trilogy.

Thanks to the pace pick-up in the book's final half, however, there's a good chance that you might be persuaded to proceed to the next instalment. In this regard at least, *A Court Of Thorns And Roses* succeeds.

Rowena Heal

VERDICT ★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Touch Of Power
Maria V Snyder
Avry is feared for her healing powers, but when the prince's life lies in her hands, things start to change.

Author: Tim Lebbon **Publisher:** Titan Books **Price:** £7.99 **Released:** 17 April

THE SILENCE

A long-hidden predator is unleashed onto the world

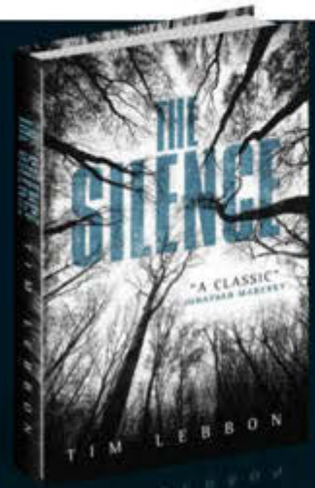
Perhaps the only thing that terrifies humanity more than creating something deadly is unleashing what was hiding in the dark. In Tim Lebbon's *The Silence*, a cave expedition releases a plague of flying reptiles that sweeps across the continent, killing all in its path.

Cities burn, the fabric of society begins to unravel and gory videos surface online as the swarm of 'vesps' nears the Channel. They hunt by sound, making quick work of capital cities: they consume whatever they find and reproduce unnaturally fast by laying eggs in their victims. The key to survival is clear: stay quiet; stay alive.

Father and daughter Huw and Ally head for a remote part of Scotland to wait out the catastrophe. But the trek north puts them at risk not only from the man-eating flock infesting Britain, but also from the increasingly desperate survivors they meet along the way. Deaf from a car accident, 14-year-old Ally is used to a world without sound, and sign language proves invaluable to her and her family, but it also marks her out as a target later on.

Lebbon's novel starts off slow, but the terror of the unknown the vesps represent, coupled with his take on global cataclysm in the social media age, make *The Silence* stand out. Each chapter starts with a cynical tweet or Facebook post. It's an interesting gimmick, as you can well believe that many would be skeptical or even bitter in the face of a worldwide panic.

Seeing the ravaged world through Ally's eyes, you come to feel for her family's plight. It keeps the tension going, because you want them to make it. The lengths that people will go to in order to survive has always made for interesting reading, and *The Silence* is a chilling story that grips you firmly by the throat.



Krystal Sim

VERDICT ★★★★☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Day Of The Triffids
John Wyndham
A meteor shower blinds the entire world, allowing man-eating plants to attack.

YOUR READS

What you lot have been reading this month



"*Forgotten Son*. First in a series about Lethbridge-Stewart before become head of UNIT UK, enjoyed it thoroughly! #BookClub" **@VidarRaven**



"*Shipstar*, the second book co-authored by Gregory Benford and Larry Niven, it has a great concept. #BookClub" **@Cascararogue**



"Finished *Dune*, started *Dune Messiah*. What's not to love? #BookClub" **@jmp1701**



"*Warrior's Wife* (historical romance guilty pleasure) I give it 4 stars out of 5 so far. Got 20% left to read. #BookClub" **@spokar**



"@StarWars *MedStar II: Jedi Healer*. Finished the first and immediately had to start II." **@TheScoobyDoom**



"I'm reading *The Moon King* by Neil Williamson and it's excellent! I'd give it my very highest recommendation. #BookClub" **@Pictish_Ninja**



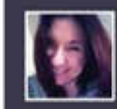
"*Circle Of Fire* by new author Owen Elgie, so far so great! #BookClub" **@quidditysea**



"*The Boy With The Porcelain Blade* by @Den_Patrick loving it so far. Very evocative and well-written. #BookClub" **@rwprest**



"I'm reading *Thief's Magic* by Trudi Canavan, it's brilliant. #BookClub" **@rpg1409**



"Reading *The City And The City* by China Miéville #BookClub" **@nikkiboom_boom**



"*The First 15 Lives of Harry August* by @ClaireNorth42 **@whiskeyrich**

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60 SECONDS WITH Charlaine Harris



What can you tell us about what's in store for the residents of Midnight in *Day Shift*?
I can't tell you too much about what's in store for the residents, but what's in store for the reader is more revelations, more action and more conflict. Readers will learn more about the secrets of some of the Midnighters, and they'll meet a new character or two.

What is it about small towns that makes them such a great setting for supernatural mysteries?
I think it's the same thing that can make small towns great for a conventional mystery: there's a closed setting, with the opportunity for outsiders to happen in, but a steady group of regulars to fill in the major roles. I grew up in a tiny town, and since then I've lived in many other small places (though none as small as Tunica, Mississippi). It's a world I understand and can make work.

> "IT'S A WORLD I UNDERSTAND AND CAN MAKE WORK"

We've heard that a character from the Sookie Stackhouse novels makes a cameo. Does that impulse to create a shared universe come naturally?
I had to do a little shuffling to make this series fit in the Sookie universe, and a little modifying. But since I brought over a character from that universe, I had to try. I think it's credible. I don't mind creating different universes, because creation is fun, but there's always the obligation to make the world believable.

Do you think you'll write another series as long-running as the Sookie Stackhouse Mysteries?
I have a hard time imagining that right now. I never expected Sookie to run as long as she did. But it was so much fun for a long time, I wouldn't be averse to that if I had the kind of idea that can keep me revved up. I'll know if I see it.



Have people stopped asking *True Blood* questions?
No! Maybe they never will.

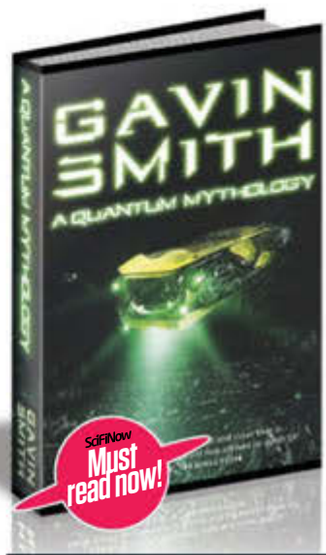
Day Shift by Charlaine Harris is out 7 May, published by Gollancz.

Details **Author:** Gavin G Smith **Publisher:** Gollancz **Price:** £16.99 **Released:** Out now

A QUANTUM MYTHOLOGY

A mad temporal dash

Some science-fiction books can be enjoyed by nature of their refined characters or clarity of narrative. Some can be enjoyed for their allegorical impact. Some can be enjoyed for the bold vision, and others can be enjoyed for their pure, unadulterated madness. File *A Quantum Mythology* squarely under the latter.



It kicks off with a machine-gunning of short hooks, jumping from an alternative version of today to a Pict-like tribe encountering a mythical threat and a far future filled with crazy creations, outlandish technology and unflinching brutality. All of these strands are connected in more ways than one, eventually mixing the three main narratives into a unified epic.

Smith benefits from his obvious knowledge of medieval history in tribal chapters, painting a vivid portrait of a world you believe in, even if his version is very much larger than life. Similarly, he taps into the (post-) modern fascination with superpowers in the contemporary part of the story while mixing an alien element into the adventurous proceedings.

However, the far-future (and far-out) space opera aspect of *A Quantum Mythology* might be the one to divide opinion the most. On one level, his fearless approach to strange names, fantastical concepts and speculative technology contains thrilling echoes of Peter F Hamilton on a good day. On another, it constantly threatens to derail the whole story, as the necessary suspension of disbelief is strained at times. He comes up with concepts and technologies almost as fast as you could write them, but their function, be it technical or narrative, is often less than clear. It's also where Smith's tendency toward the generic in dialogue sequence shows the most. Still, with a sense of action befitting an IMAX blockbuster and a relentless onslaught of invention, the pure sense of fun overrides any doubts you might have.

Yes, it's expansive – sometimes too huge for its own good, presenting more characters and concepts than it knows what to do with. But *A Quantum Mythology* delivers a mad and entertaining sci-fi epic.

Erlingur Einarsson

VERDICT ★★★★☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Dreaming Void
Peter F Hamilton
The first part of the *Void* trilogy plunges the reader into a rich post-Earth, richly populated world of discovery and dread.

Author: Taran Matharu **Publisher:** Hodder **Price:** £12.99 **Released:** 5 May

SUMMONER BOOK ONE: THE NOVICE

Release your inner demons

Already an internet sensation on **wattpad.com**, Taran Matharu's debut novel is destined to mark the beginning of a very exciting journey for young adult readers. With a *Harry Potter*-sized hole in the market, *Summoner: The Novice*, may have big enough balls to fill it.

There are incredible similarities between Harry and the 15-year-old hero of this new series, Fletcher, who leads a simple life in the village of Pelt. Abandoned as a baby, Fletcher has been raised by Berdon, the blacksmith who discovered the poor devil on his doorstep. Gifted an ancient and magical book by an old soldier, Fletcher discovers he has an aptitude for summoning demons, a craft that is required in the vicious war against the Orcs. Think this all sounds a little familiar? Indeed, as well as orcs there are dwarves and elves too, and would you believe it, a Golem. Wondering if there will be one ring to bind them all too? Now that would just be blatant plagiarism, and the young author has more imagination than that.

Following an unfortunate incident with his demon and the town bully, Fletcher flees Pelt and finds himself student at a school for Summoners. There, he encounters an inspirational head teacher, a nice teacher, a firm but fair teacher and Rook, a real Snape in the grass! Fletcher has his work cut out as a commoner, and there are major race and class issues: the rich kids have Draco Malfoy tendencies and much stronger demons.

It's clear Matharu has been inspired by Rowling and Tolkien; quite frankly what young writer hasn't? While it is difficult not to make comparisons, why not take inspiration from two of the most celebrated literary giants in the stratosphere? It works.



Claire Nicholls

VERDICT ★★★★★

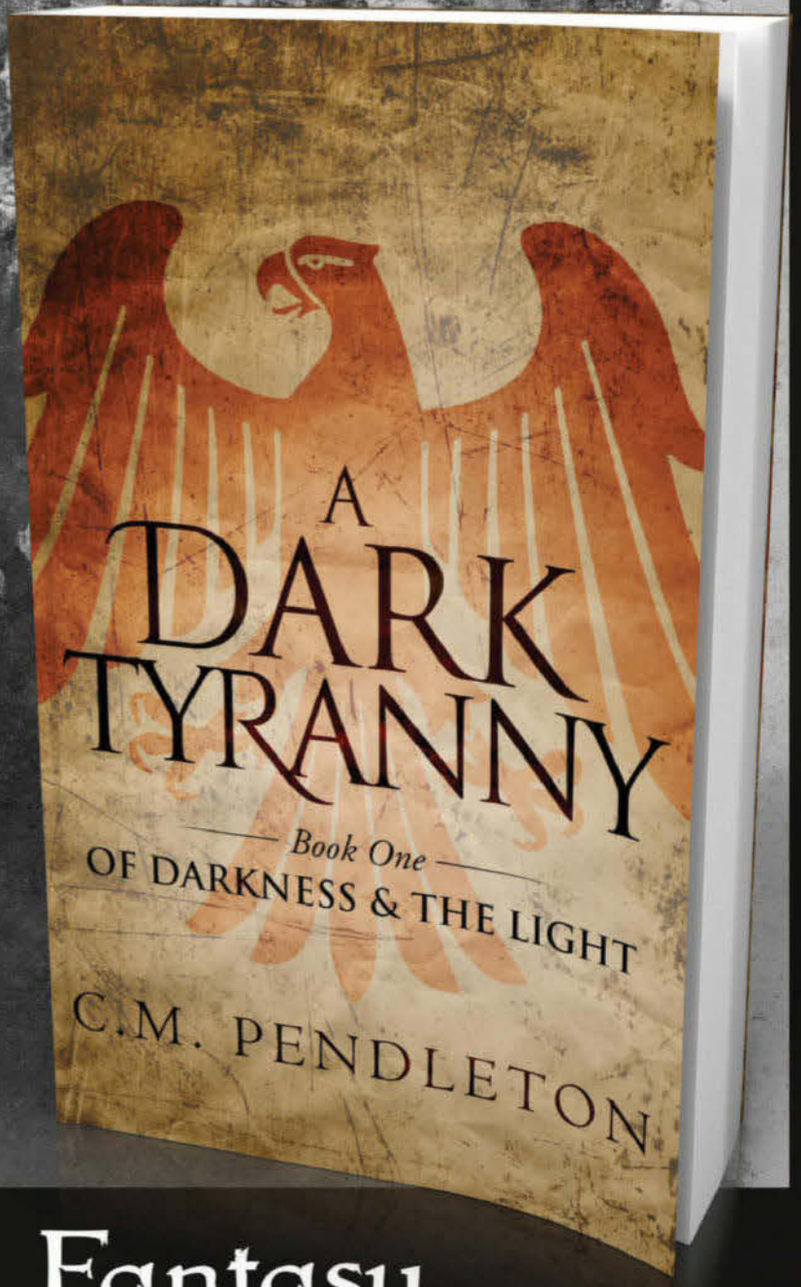


IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Amulet Of Samarkand
Jonathan Stroud
A vengeful magician's apprentice summons a 5,000-year-old djinn.

Survivors Become Heroes

Heroes Become Legends

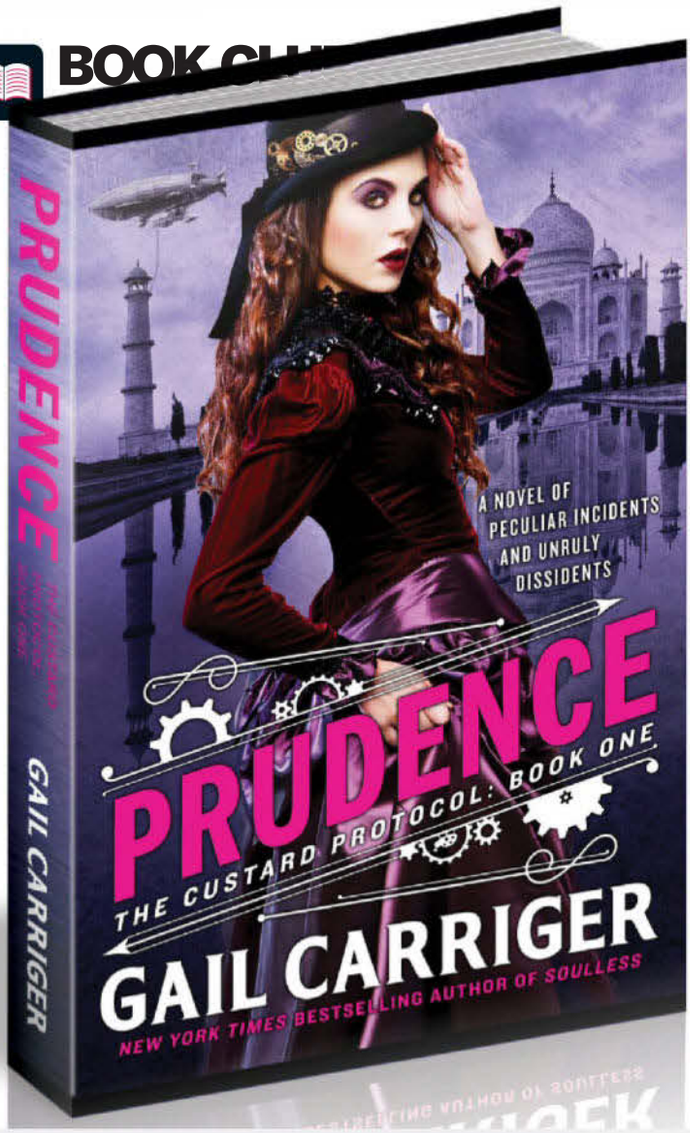


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Details **Author:** Gail Carriger **Publisher:** Orbit **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** Out now

PRUDENCE: THE CUSTARD PROTOCOL BOOK 1

Saving the world in style

Gail Carriger already has a fanbase following the *Parasol Protectorate* saga, and there's a good chance they will be similarly enamoured with *Prudence*.

Prudence Alessandra Maccon Akeldama, or Rue to her friends, cuts a dashing figure in high-society steampunk Victorian London due to her looks, impeccable fashion sense and being a metanatural – a rare creature able to take on the powers of werewolves.

When her vampire foster father Dama asks Rue to travel to India to investigate a new strain of tea, she assumes command of his fine dirigible and a crew that includes her best friend and a roguish French engineer. But is it really the tea that Dama's after, and why are so there so many interested vampire parties?

It's easy to get swept along with the world Carriger has created, as her love of the genre is obvious and infectious. The opening scene is great fun, and the resourceful, determined and tough Rue proves good company. The author also gives us a nice spin on supernatural politics, as the worlds of fashion and the London elite have adjusted to accommodate the supernatural, while branches of the family have spread throughout the Empire.

Prudence is a little light on plot, but the final third, in which Rue stumbles upon a new race and a potential political crisis, hints at the series' potential.

Jonathan Hatfull

VERDICT ★★★☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Lonely Werewolf Girl
Martin Miller
Runaway royal werewolf teen Kalix is taken in by a pair of students in this brilliant and funny fantasy tale.

Details **Author:** Kevin Hearne **Publisher:** Century **Price:** £13.59 **Released:** Out now

STAR WARS: HEIR TO THE JEDI

The Force isn't strong in this one

Following on from the functional *A New Dawn* and the impressive *Tarkin*, *Star Wars: Heir To The Jedi* presents a hitherto-unseen take on *Star Wars*, positing a Luke Skywalker post-*A New Hope* and pre-*The Empire Strikes Back* on a mission for the Rebel Alliance.

As far as writing *Star Wars* novels, it's a brave and experimental approach, taking the form of first-person narrative from Luke's point of view. But it doesn't really work. Frequent references to Obi-Wan, Leia et al aside, the personality on show here isn't Luke. It's hard to put a finger on why, but Luke isn't exactly the most enigmatic characters in the saga. It could be argued that author Kevin Hearne's time might have been better spent with a Han Solo or Boba Fett tale.

One of the bigger problems is that the rest of the story doesn't seem to fit in with the wider universe. Featuring invisible, brain-tunnelling insects and starship-eating sea monsters, it all feels more like *Star Trek*. For the most part, the Expanded Universe *Star Wars* novels have been fun largely because they were determined to exist and have fun within the universe. *Heir To The Jedi* seems determined to live outside it.

There's also a lack of dramatic tension. We know Luke will survive, and that the supporting cast he buddies up with aren't in it for the long haul. If there was an especially interesting story behind it then that could alleviate this, but it hasn't and doesn't.

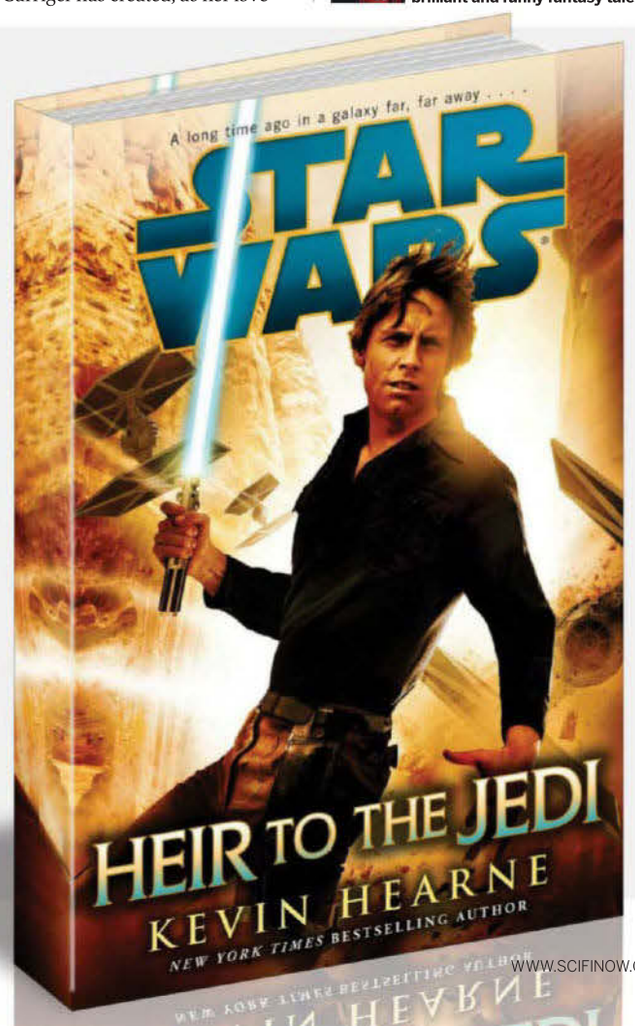
Steve Wright

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Star Wars: Tarkin
James Luceno
Provides an intriguing overview of the life of one of the saga's deadliest villains.



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What's Your Pleasure, Sir?

We talk to Clive Barker about saying goodbye to Pinhead with The Scarlet Gospels and why there's no horror without transgression

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

There are very few writers who can make the skin crawl like Clive Barker. Since he burst onto the scene in 1985, Barker's work defined visceral transgressive horror for a generation. His creations have terrified moviegoers in *Hellraiser* and *Candyman*, while novels like *Weaveworld*, *Cabal* and *Imajica* opened doors to strange, terrifying and often beautiful new worlds. For better or worse, he is perhaps best known as the man who gave the genre one of its most enduring characters: Pinhead, the Cenobite who offers a world of pleasure and pain beyond our reckoning. With his latest novel, the long-awaited *The Scarlet Gospels*, Barker will tell his final story.

"If feels great!" he tells us. "I want the bastard to go out with an undignified end. He's a horrible son of a bitch. I'm always surprised by his staying power, but it makes sense to me that people have gravitated toward him. As I've said before, a story is only as good as its villain, and Pinhead is as vile as they get. And I mean that. He's a bad, bad guy, and it feels good to see him get his comeuppance."

When it comes to what drove Barker to finally return to the Pinhead character, Barker tells us that part of the appeal was being able to flesh out the world of the character as much as the character himself. "That's a big question, because we have to go way back to the impetus of Pinhead and who he is," he explains. "The model for him was the Nazis – Himmler in particular. Himmler was a man who was deeply connected to the occult. He had a deeply sadistic nature, but was distanced from that nature because he got sick at the sight of blood. There's a story where he once went to a concentration camp and passed out when some blood got on his glasses. That informed a lot of who Pinhead was, but this time I get to tell the story of what's going on around him. And much like the Nazis and war-time Europe, the Hell in which Pinhead does his workings is a bombed-out city grasping to hang on to the legacy of its former greatness."

Pinhead isn't the only returning character in *The Scarlet Gospels*. Our guide to Hell is Harry D'Amour, the private detective first seen in the short story *The Last Illusion*. "I always saw Pinhead and D'Amour as a perfect Yin and Yang," enthuses Barker. "These two characters belong together, if you think about it. D'Amour, tortured, lives above ground in a Hell of his own making. Pinhead dwells below in a Hell from which he longs to escape."

It's Pinhead's determination to break free that gives *The Scarlet Gospels* its starting point, as Harry accidentally creates a rift between our world and the fiery furnace below. When Pinhead fails to convert Harry to his cause, he kidnaps his friend. To save her, he's going to have to go through Hell.

You might imagine that writing a novel with two of his best-known characters at its centre might feel like a homecoming, but Barker tells us that the duo are never very far away. "These characters are always with me," he explains. "Pinhead especially. Every day a bit of business arises in which one or the other of these characters comes up. Someone will ask for a quote, or I receive new notes on a *Hellraiser* comic, or someone wants to screen one of the films and I'm brought through their worlds all over again, so in that sense these characters are never far from my door. I like to say that it's possible they won't let me."

Excitingly, it sounds as though there's plenty more of Barker's work heading for the big screen. It's been a while since we had the glut of movies based on his *Books Of Blood* stories, but he tells us that we can look forward to more news soon. "Oh yes," he enthuses. "There's quite a line-up planned. There's a film called *The Entwined* that will begin production shortly. Josh Boone (*The Fault In Our Stars*) has optioned my novel *Imajica* with the intent of turning it into a season-long miniseries like *True Detective*. I haven't been this excited about a project in a long time. Josh is a man of vision, and I assure you that what will come out of this will be unlike anything you've ever seen."

With *The Scarlet Gospels*, a fourth *Abarat* book and these film plans, in addition to his work as an artist, Barker has no intention of slowing down. "I'm pleased to say that I'm 30 years into my career writing and creating horror, and I still feel as though the fun is only just beginning," he tells us. When it comes to horror, he's determined that it remain as visceral as ever. "Yes," he states. "Unequivocally yes. Without transgression, there is no horror."



The Scarlet Gospels by Clive Barker is available from 21 May, published by Macmillan.

Clive Barker at the movies

The Barker film adaptations you must see

Hellraiser (1987)



Barker's directorial debut is every bit as stunning and skin-crawling as it ever was, despite increasingly woeful sequels.

Nightbreed (1990)



Butchered by Morgan Creek on its theatrical release, *Nightbreed* has been restored to its full glory with the Cabal cut.

Candyman (1992)



Based on his story *The Forbidden*, this haunting urban legend tale of Helen Lyle's hunt for the Candyman is a modern classic.

Lord Of Illusions (1995)



Barker directed this adaptation of the first Harry D'Amour story. It's a mixed bag, but boasts some incredible sequences.

The Midnight Meat Train (2008)



Ryuhei Kitamura gives Barker's short a beautifully shot film as Bradley Cooper discovers the brutal truth beneath NYC.

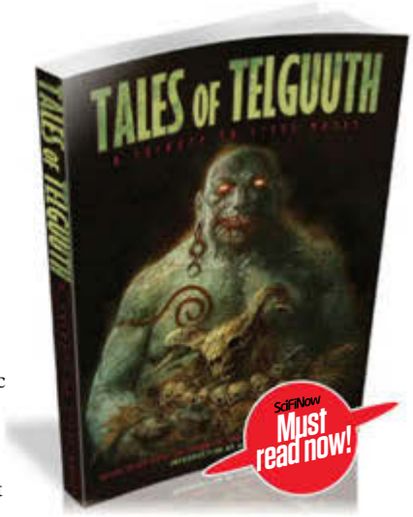


"I ALWAYS SAW PINHEAD AND D'AMOUR AS A PERFECT YIN AND YANG. THEY BELONG TOGETHER"
CLIVE BARKER

Details Writer: Steve Moore **Artists:** Greg Staples, Clint Langley, Paul Johnson and more **Publisher:** Rebellion **Price:** £18.99 **Released:** Out now

TALES OF TELGUUTH: A TRIBUTE TO STEVE MOORE

Weirder fantasy



One of the most influential creators in British comics, the late Steve Moore, passed away before what might have been his greatest stab at the mainstream, the Dwayne Johnston-starred *Hercules*. Given the lack of resemblance to his graphic novel discernible in the end result, that was probably for the best.

Yet when it comes to barbarians, evil kings and far off lands, 2000 AD strip *Tales Of Telguuth* is where he cut his teeth. A blackly comic and bitterly ironic anthology title not dissimilar to *Tharg's Future Shocks* (which Moore also pioneered), Telguuth was his exclusive domain, and aside from a vague attempt to present it as science fiction by referring to its setting as "an alien world in the galactic hub", *Tales Of Telguuth* owes far more to the Zothique-set weird fantasy of HP Lovecraft contemporary Clark Ashton Smith.

Smith is a fair point of comparison. Just as his legacy was overshadowed by Lovecraft – despite the mutual admiration the two basked in – Moore has been often linked to another sorcerer supreme of British comics, Alan Moore. Steve introduced his namesake to the industry, and the pair enjoyed a lifelong friendship untouched by the acrimony that seemed to follow many of Alan's creative couplings. Indeed, he's put aside his long-standing beef with 2000 AD to write a touching foreword for this luscious volume.

Taken in one sitting the recurring motifs – man who is up to no good is hoisted by his own demonic petard – dull the impact the strips might have had wedged between the Zarjaz antics of *Judge Dredd* or *Rogue Trooper*, but the art is sublime. The painted worlds of Sláine stalwarts Greg Staples, Clint Langley, to name just two, bring a dark opulence that few 2000 AD strips could fully enjoy thanks to demands of the weekly publishing deadline.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★★☆



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Red Sonja: Queen Of Plagues
Gail Simone/Walter Giovanni
***The Birds Of Prey* fan favourite reboots Robert E Howard's bikini-clad warrior woman.**





Details Writer: Dan Abnett **Artist:** Colin MacNeil **Publisher:** Rebellion **Price:** £13.99 **Released:** Out now

INSURRECTION: LIBERTY

The Empire strikes back

Billed as a shameless meeting of *Warhammer 40,000* and *Judge Dredd*, Dan Abnett's *Insurrection* concludes with the semi-mythical tones that fans of his *Black Library* fiction would instantly recognise.

Taking a step back from the main story arc, Liberty shows the epic conclude through the eyes of Colonial Marshal Willard Gallows, who finds total war come to his sleepy corner of the galaxy and the shockwaves of rebel Colonial Marshal Kerel Luther throws him into the conflict against his will.

The *Judge Dredd* universe – even as far away from the Big Meg as this – is defined by its surplus of law and its bitterly ironic lack of justice, and as a result it's fairly obvious how this story will end up for the hopeless idealists we've grown to love over the previous volumes. But with off-ripe gothic space opera specialist Abnett and the utterly iconic dark future art of Colin MacNeil as the story engine, it's good fun watching it get there.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★★☆☆



Details Writer: Victor Gischler **Artist:** Tazio Bettin **Publisher:** Titan Comics **Price:** £14.99 **Released:** Out now

SALLY OF THE WASTELAND

Whedon frenzy

Joss Whedon has a lot to answer for, not least of which is Victor Gischler (*Punisher MAX*, *X-Men*) and newcomer Tazio Bettin's cheesecake nose cone painting *Sally Of The Wasteland*, which fills dialogue full of Harley Quinn-style sassy non-sequitors in the hope that this says "Strong Female Character" loudly enough to justify her tiny pants and the need to strip out of her wet clothes.

Yes *Buffy* used schlock as a launchpad for progressive storytelling, but *Sally*'s hope that a similarly smirkful B-movie setting will hide a multitude of regressive sins is misplaced.

It's a shame, because there's some real ingenuity and wit to the *Fallout*-influenced post-apocalyptic B-movie *Sally Of The Wasteland* – such as the Alabama State cheerleading warrior women, the Bamazons – and the psychic octopus KKK that intoxicates people with and idealised vision of life in the South. But you'd have to really love comics to make it that far.

James Hoare
VERDICT ★★☆☆☆



Details **Writers:** Nick Abadzis/Al Ewing, Rob Williams **Artists:** Elena Casagrande/Simon Fraser
Publisher: Titan Comics **Price:** £10.99 each **Released:** 3 July/ 7 August

DOCTOR WHO: REVOLUTIONS IN TERROR/ AFTER LIFE

10 plus 11 equals fun

Doctor Who is one of those licensed comics that it's impossible to do right. As you'd expect from a show with a 51-year heritage, it's impossible to do *Doctor Who* right on TV too; there'll always be some short-changed, old-school fan in his Prydonian Chapter robes or die-hard RTDevotee bemoaning the latest episode for not quite measuring up to the idealised vision of the show they've constructed.

Titan Comics' new Tenth and Eleventh Doctor series – the first arcs collected in *Revolutions In Terror* ★★★☆☆ and *After Life* ★★★★☆ – are very similar in the sense that they don't quite fit. They read simply like someone writing in the style of *Doctor Who* rather than simply *being Doctor Who*, but – spoiler alert – that's all that *Doctor Who* is; a lot of people writing things in the style of *Doctor Who*, subject to their own prejudices, preferences and hazy memories of favourite episodes.

Marvel UK veteran Nick Abadzis takes Ten to New York, complete with a new Latina everygirl companion balancing familial expectations and career aspirations. The plot is suitably new *Who*, with unseen aliens manifesting fears in every day places, like 'The God Complex' with the transformative body horror of 'The Empty Child'. Tonally it's more than a little reminiscent of Dan Abnett's excellent Seven-era strip from 1991, 'The Mark Of The Mandragora' too.

Suicide Risk artist Elena Casagrande has the kinetic chops for the subject, the touch of Manga offering a fluidity that lifts action scenes, and of the art talent across the two volumes she's the standout. Simon Fraser (*Nikolai Dante*)'s world is rich with humour, but his attempt to capture Smith's distinctive chops and snozz border on caricature. Where *After Life* has the edge over *Revolutions In Terror* is not in that it feels like a Moffat-era series, complete with slowly manifesting arc, but the genuine tragedy of new companion Alice Obeifune – a woman in need of an escape, yet the sadness she's running from is one she can't help but carry with her. It's affecting work from Al Ewing (*Mighty Avengers*) and Rob Williams (*Daken: Dark Wolverine*), especially when you might be expecting their mischievous senses of humour to be at the fore.

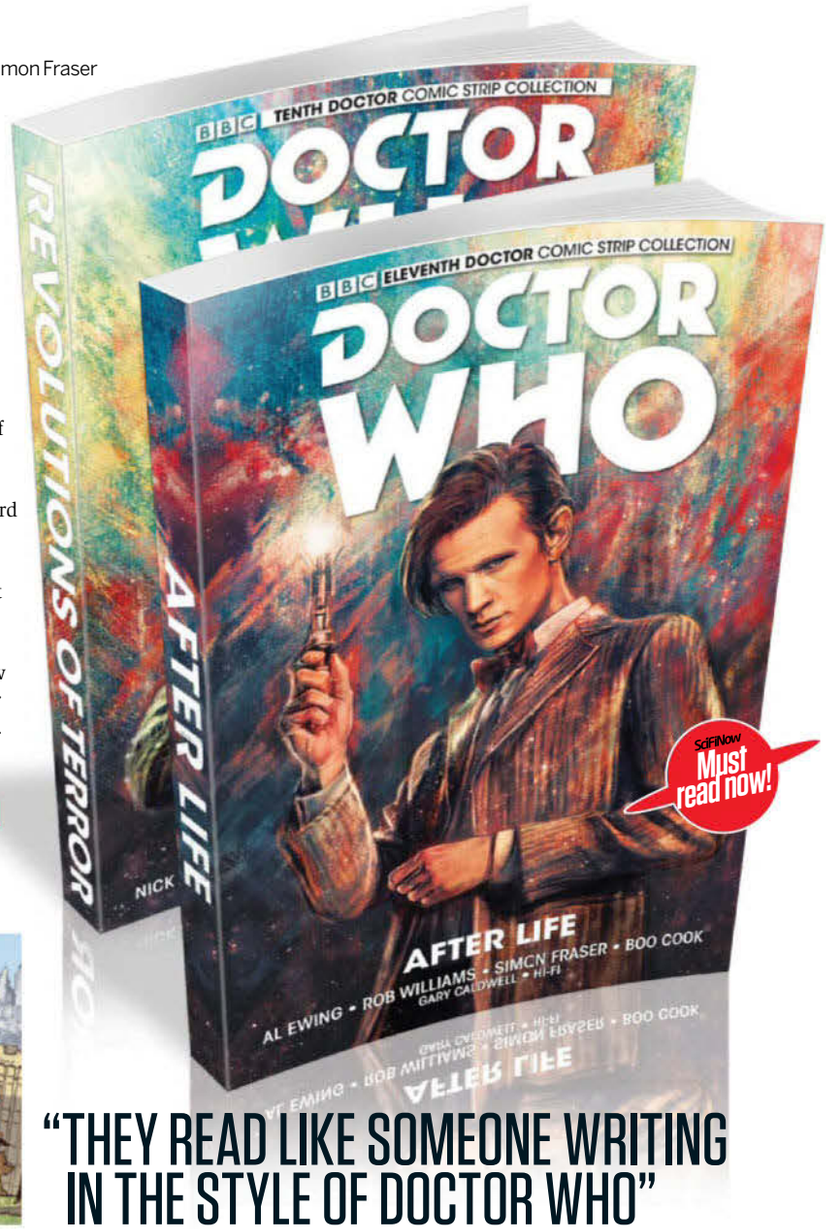
Instead, that's channelled into their world-building, which is every bit as weird and wonderful as you'd expect from the energetic co-creators of the psychedelic *Zaucer Of Zilk* and the upbeat/downbeat *Ordinary*, and the playful plotting which seems to draw from the surrealism of Douglas Adams short tenure on the show and the sense that in the world of *Doctor Who* anything can – and *should* happen.

James Hoare

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Doctor Who: The Good Soldier
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"THEY READ LIKE SOMEONE WRITING IN THE STYLE OF DOCTOR WHO"





OFF THE CHAIN

Back in 1992, some of comics' biggest names got together to found Image Comics. We speak to Todd McFarlane, one of those people, about the legacy of Spawn, working on Spider-Man, going at it alone and becoming a byword for gritty storytelling...

WORDS **RUSSELL SHEATH**

Before the Kingsmen blasted their way from comic-book to the silver screen and the Walking Dead shuffled into our living rooms, seven of the biggest names in comics had a dream that would become legend. What if creators were able to own a stake in the characters they created? What if the hard work and effort they were putting into creating characters like Deadpool, Venom and Cable was to benefit them, rather than the corporations they worked for? What if seven men could redefine an industry? What if one of those creators really grasped the opportunity and created a cross-platform, multimedia comic-book hero? This is the story of how Todd McFarlane achieved the impossible.

Back in the early Nineties, that's exactly what the biggest artists in comics set out to do when they created Image comics, the current home to *The Walking Dead* and Mark Millar's *The Secret Service*.

The Image founders would become the rock stars of geekdom as the 'Image era' of the early Nineties comic landscape bought speculator interest in comics to new heights and made seven artists wealthy, successful and notorious in equal measure. If there's a single character that exemplifies the dream of creator independence that the Image comics founders strove for, then it has to be Todd McFarlane's Spawn.

Canadian-born artist Todd McFarlane had already achieved superstar status in the late Eighties with his record-breaking run on Marvel's *Spider-Man*. But as time wore on, increasing frustration with editorial demands would see McFarlane quit Marvel to team up with the seven biggest artists in the industry, forming their own company: Image comics.

For his first creation under the Image banner, McFarlane returned to a character he first imagined in high school: Spawn, the supernatural anti-hero who would herald the creation of a business empire.

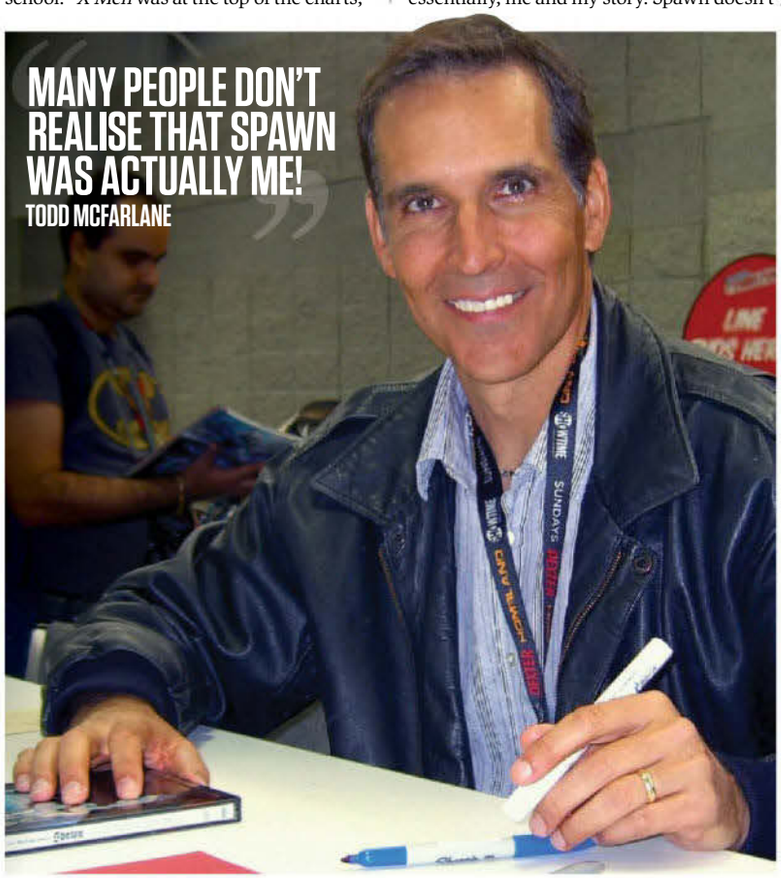
Spawn #1 hit the shelves in 1992 and sold 1.8 million copies, a record for an independent book at the time, as the combination of McFarlane's dynamic, exaggerated pencils and the unravelling mystery of *Spawn*'s origin, would prove a winning combination.

Recalling that origin story of his own bid for creative independence, McFarlane says: "I created *Spawn* when *Star Wars* was big, and originally I created him in a sci-fi environment."

McFarlane explains the evolution of the character's visual identity: "You could tell I created him a while ago because I was using all the Forties and Fifties American superhero trappings. He's got a mask, a cape, boots, a belt, a symbol on his chest, because every character had those things."

McFarlane's Image partners Jim Lee and Whilce Portacio had both left *X-Men*-related books to join Image. Jim Lee had sold 8 million copies (a record that still stands) of *X-Men* #1 in 1991, in doing so creating a look that would define the characters at the time. McFarlane recalls how his own aesthetic, though, was determinedly old school. "*X-Men* was at the top of the charts, and those characters had no masks and a commando-type look, which carried into books like *Youngblood* and *WildCats*. In those books you saw a much more modern influence, where I was stubborn enough to stick with what I'd drawn 15 years before and didn't pay too much attention to what was happening at the time. It was the same design I came up with as a kid."

Spawn tells the faustian tale of Al Simmons, a black-ops agent who is betrayed and murdered by his own people, only to make a deal with the Devil so that he can see the love of his life once again. The story was closer to home than readers might imagine, reveals McFarlane. "Many people don't realise that Spawn was actually me! They say 'write about what you know', and there's no one I know better than Todd McFarlane. Spawn was, essentially, me and my story. Spawn doesn't







embrace either side of the powers trying to manipulate him. He just wants to be left to be his own man and to succeed or fail on his own merits."

Indeed, this is a thinly veiled reference to his battles with Marvel editorial staff and the changes they asked him to make during his run on *Spider-Man*. In bringing *Spawn* to the page, McFarlane would play to his strengths and, in trademark style, find success by going against what was prevalent at the time. "I can't say I had everything all planned out, but here's what I knew from day one: I wanted to make him a man of colour, and I was conscious about not making that an issue.

"There had been other books where they had minority characters, but made race an issue." McFarlane continues, hinting at the dynamic way that comic-books and reality can collide. "After drawing *Spider-Man*, I realised that we assume those characters are all good-looking white dudes, and with that in mind, I knew I wanted to make Al Simmons a black man. When I was writing *Spider-Man* I had written a scene that I never got to use in the end: a rich Wall Street guy is walking down the street, and he goes down an alley and is the victim of a mugging by a young black guy from Harlem. Spider-Man comes in, deals with the bad guy and saves the day, but at the end of the scene the Wall Street guy is walking away and says, 'Thanks Spidey, I'm glad you saved me from that goddamn…' The guy used a word that you shouldn't use, beginning with the letter 'N'.

"Spidey responds by slamming the guy against the wall and, getting as close as he can to him says, 'What colour do you think I am under this mask?' There's no indication as to what Spidey is, he could be Asian, Hispanic, African America. The reaction to Spider-Man is that he *must* be one of us, ie a white guy."

As *Spawn*'s popularity grew, McFarlane would turn his attention to realising his character in three dimensions. Fuelled by his frustration with toy companies wanting to make *Spawn* toys but proving themselves unable to capture McFarlane's artistic vision, the artist decided to establish his own company. Award-winning and hugely influential, McFarlane Toys, with its dynamic sculpting and scale, broke from the standards that had dominated the industry for years and, acquiring licences for franchises such as *The X-Files*, *The Simpsons* and *Halo*, redefined what was possible in the action figure industry.

As McFarlane's reputation grew and other opportunities presented themselves, he found himself invited to evolve his artistic vision, directing videos for bands like Pearl Jam and Korn, which would lead to him adding Grammys to his list of awards. Yet, despite success in other media, McFarlane never strayed far from Al Simmons and *Spawn*. They were the heart and soul of his creative work.

> **THERE'S NO INDICATION AS TO WHAT SPIDEY IS, HE COULD BE ASIAN, HISPANIC, AFRICAN AMERICA**
> **TODD MCFARLANE**



McFarlane infamously faced creative interference from Marvel during his run on *Spider-Man*.

"I think that to some extent people have to work out where their strengths and weaknesses are," McFarlane offers when quizzed on why he didn't create numerous franchises away from *Spawn*. "For me, that was knowing that I wouldn't be able to concentrate on having 20 different characters in ten different books with ten different groups of creative people. I wanted to come up with just one thing. I want to sit on it and plant that creative seed, water it, feed it and see if it can grow into something. I'm more satisfied with having one giant oak tree than a bunch of smaller trees."

Inevitably, distractions would come, and in 1997 the lights dimmed and *Spawn: The Movie* exploded onto screens. What better indication could there be of how much *Spawn* had penetrated the mainstream, as McFarlane's unique visuals were now being realised as toys, comics, music videos and even costumes designed for the band Kiss. Something about Spawn's character arc and look really appealed to the masses.

Despite finding success in a multitude of outlets, and at a time when the term 'multi-media' was still in its infancy, the movie version of *Spawn* found itself at the crest of a wave where audiences were already faced a flood of dark and moody comic adaptations, inspired in large part by the success Tim Burton's 1989 smash hit *Batman*. *Spawn* did moderate business in cinemas at a time when comic sales were falling, and many were saying that Image's days were numbered. Amid an increasingly challenging climate for the comic industry, *Spawn* endured, and where the live-action movie failed to ignite fans' enthusiasm, HBO's Todd McFarlane's *Spawn*: a gritty, animated version of the Spawn mythos, garnered widespread acclaim from fans and critics alike. The show won an Emmy in 1999.

Over 20 years, *Spawn* has had its high and lows, as once again, character and creator's similar paths converged with the 2015's 250th issue, an achievement that McFarlane is rightly proud of. "Issue 250 tells me that after 20 years we are still here and we aren't going away." McFarlane contentedly observes. "From a creative point of view, you may be able to come up with an idea or two, and if you are lucky that idea may be able to outlive you. The book is still here, and I'm going to die and leave some kind of legacy behind."

With #251, *Spawn* enters a bold new era, with a new creative team comprising Eisner Award-winning writer Paul Jenkins



and fan-favourite artist Jonboy Meyers, propelling the hero in a new direction.

"Years ago, Paul Jenkins wrote a book called *Curse Of Spawn*. The great thing was that it didn't feel like an extension of the regular *Spawn* book. He went off into his own little corner and I thought it was cool," offers McFarlane, who is understandably picky when it comes to handing over the reins of his creation.

Satisfying one of comics' most notable talents is no easy chore, but McFarlane is very complimentary about Meyers. "The number one thing JB brings is his enthusiasm," gushes McFarlane. Meyers' run on *Spawn* will begin with *Spawn: Resurrection*, and then continue with #251.

"With *Spider-Man*, I went in and did my funky poses and did some cool stuff with the webbing, but it was still *Spider-Man*." McFarlane remembers.

"JB has come in, and I've let him do what he wants to do to bring 'his look' to the character by finding the two or three things that become his 'signature' on *Spawn*."

Issue #250 also heralds some changes story wise, as original Hellspawn Simmons returns to the fray. McFarlane has been particularly looking forward to seeing this. "When Al comes back, he will understand and accept that he is never going to be normal. He's going to go on the offence and is going to start to give all the people who have tried to manipulate him, the same medicine they gave him, to the point where they want *him* to leave *them* alone.

If *Spawn* has a legacy, then it is surely to be found in the enduring nature of character and creator. In an industry where comic titles adhere to regular cancellations and reboots, *Spawn*, much like its creator, stands alone.

"You know what the highest numbered book in comics is, right now?" asks the creator before gleefully replying: "*Spawn*! I take that issue #250 as a badge of honour, because I look at the higher numbered books and think 'Wow, that books been around for decades – that must be a pretty solid book, I think I'll give that a chance'."

Of *Spawn*'s anniversary, McFarlane hints once again at the parallels between character and creator, suggesting that for both *Spawn* and McFarlane the world had better watch out. "I made a man, who by no fault of his own was put into an extreme situation and all he ever wanted was to lead a normal life and that reality is not there for him. He's been struggling with that reality for 250 issues and I'm hoping that for the next 250 issues he is going to deal with that reality. Al Simmons has to come back a changed man. He has to be wiser, smarter and now that he accepts the game he's in, he's going to play that game to the best of his abilities."



After 24 years, he is still going strong on *Spawn*.



Al Simmons, his most iconic creation, has recently returned.





McFarlane famously teamed up with Frank Miller for the *Spawn/Batman* crossover.

The Magnificent Seven

The Image founders, 24 years later...



Jim Lee

With his Wildstorm studio, Jim Lee would create titles such as *WildCats*, *Stormwatch*. and *Deathblow*.

Having sold the company to DC in 1999, Wildstorm soon ceased to exist, with Lee eventually becoming co-publisher of DC, HE remains a sought after artist.



Marc Silvestri

The 'artists artist' Silvestri was another 'X alumni' leaping from the pages of *Wolverine* to form his own Image imprint, Top Cow. It became known for developing new talent.

He continues to work on creator-owned projects while lending his talents to both Marcel and DC.



Rob Liefeld

The youngest and most infamous, Rob Liefeld would become a polarising figure in the industry, having created some of its most enduring characters, including Deadpool, Cable and Shatterstar.

Liefeld returned to both Marvel and DC and plans a *Bloodstrike* relaunch for 2015.



Whilce Portacio

Philippine-born artist Whilce Portacio leaped from *Uncanny X-Men* to his first Image offering, *Wetworks*, which he would publish through Jim Lee's Wildstorm imprint. Having since worked for both DC and Marvel, Portacio continues to support the company he helped form.



Erik Larsen

Erik Larsen joins Todd McFarlane as the only Image founder to continually publish his initial offering from Image, *Savage Dragon*.

Following a brief stint taking the reins of Publisher for Image comics, founding Highbrow Entertainment and Spider-Man, Larsen still works on *Savage Dragon*.



Jim Valentino

Jim Valentino created *ShadowHawk*, his first and most notable offering from Image via his 'Shadowline Studios' imprint.

He performed a stint as publisher at Image, and now Valentino continues to champion the rights of comic creators as part of the Hero Initiative charity.



Todd McFarlane

As you may have gathered from the preceding four pages, he isn't doing too badly for himself.

McFarlane has overseen the return of his iconic Al Simmons in *Spawn: Resurrection*, and continues to be heavily involved in comics and his toys line

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STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS PROVED TO BE THE PERFECT ANTIDOTE TO THE PREQUELS, SHOWING THAT STAR WARS COULD PAY TRIBUTE TO ITS HERITAGE WHILE ASPIRING TO SOMETHING GREATER. CREATOR DAVE FILONI AND THE SHOW'S STARS TALK TO US ABOUT TAKING THE SAGA INTO A BIGGER WORLD…

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

To say the prequel triumvirate of *The Phantom Menace*, *Attack Of The Clones* and *Revenge Of The Sith* were a letdown for *Star Wars* fans would be doing disservice to the word 'understatement'. Fans wanted to see the Jedi hero that Obi-Wan Kenobi spoke of in *Return Of The Jedi*; instead, they got a whiny, arrogant child killer. Key moments like the fall of the Jedi were squeezed into a minute-long montage, and a fertile breeding ground for potentially exciting storylines were replaced by guff like trade routes, midichlorians and gungans. These truly were dark times.

Yet, intermingled among the dirge, there were some glimmers of hope. Running from 2003-05, the 2D-animated *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* injected a welcome jolt of madcap energy into a saga that was in danger of stagnating. Liberally borrowing the over-the-top action aesthetic creator Genndy Tartakovsky had used previously on the likes of *Samurai Jack*, the show was met with an overwhelmingly positive reaction from fans. It was totally different to any iteration of *Star Wars* seen before, but it proved that the demand was there.

Indeed, it was something that George Lucas took heed of. In 2005 at the *Star Wars* Celebration III event in Indianapolis, he announced the creation of a new series, with Dave Filoni being hired as supervising director – despite his lack of experience in 3D animation. "I had never done CG animation before this job," remembers Filoni. "But that didn't matter to George, I think he just wanted a director that he could work with, get along with and share some of his visions with. And I was totally open to that. One of my early ideas was that maybe we'd do the Jedi in 2D and the clones or droids in CG. But George was always interested in this being CG, and I think that stems from his experience in live-action films, and what he saw that his team of animators was able to achieve in the films. That was a natural step for George."

With Filoni on board, the pieces continued to be put into place. Lucasfilm Animation divisions in California and Singapore were involved with the creation of the series, with the effects being achieved primarily through the use of Autodesk and Maya 3D software, and final assembly of the episodes taking place at Skywalker


STAR WARS
THE CLONE WARS

Ranch. Lucas was heavily involved in the day-to-day production of the series, working alongside Filoni and the writing team in the creation of the show. By 2007, an initial 22-episode first season arc had already been completed, although there was one caveat: it hadn't been picked up by a network yet.

CG animation was still in its relative infancy, and combined with the tepid critical reception received by the prequel trilogy (despite their box-office success), as such represented a risk, even coming from someone with as much clout as Lucas. Fox Broadcasting turned down the chance to host the project, and Cartoon Network also wavered. However, something soon happened that would change their mind.

James Arnold Taylor, who reprised his role voicing Obi-Wan Kenobi from the 2D *Clone Wars* series (he would also go on to voice characters like Plo Koon and Rako Hardeen), remembers of the series' genesis: "There were always these rumours that there would be another *Clone Wars*. Then we got a call from Lucasfilm… we got together and did *The Clone Wars*, then that's when George Lucas decided that the first four episodes would make a great movie."

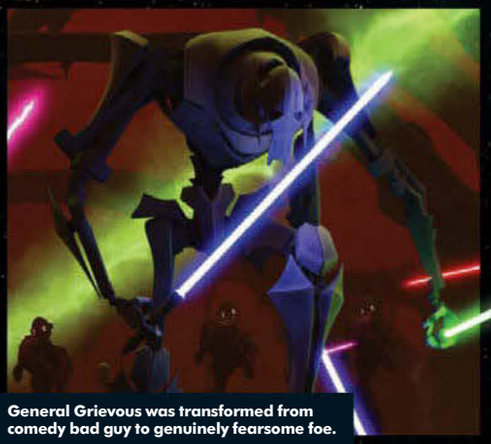
Enticed by the prospect of a theatrical run to galvanise viewing figures, Cartoon Network's interest was suddenly ignited, with Warner Bros gaining the rights to the movie (instead of the saga's traditional home at 20th Century Fox). The film was released in cinemas on 15 August 2008, over three years after *Revenge Of The Sith*, the film many assumed would be the last one on the big screen to bear the *Star Wars*

"WE WERE, 'WHAT DO YOU MEAN ANAKIN HAS A PADAWAN?'"

DAVE FILONI



The series was given license to explore aspects of the Force that hadn't been seen before.



General Grievous was transformed from comedy bad guy to genuinely fearsome foe.



Anakin's journey to the Dark Side gathered pace, especially towards the end.

TOP 10 EPISODE ARCS

Picking standout episodes is a hard business, but we've given it a go…



1. LAIR OF GRIEVOUS (S1E10)

After being built up as a genuine threat in Genndy Tartakovsky's 2D Series, *Revenge Of The Sith* saw him reduced to a coughing, hacking figure of fun. This Season One episode builds him up again, as he puts Jedi Master Kit Fisto, his former apprentice Nadhar Vebb and their accompanying clone troopers through the mill in his boobytrap-ridden dungeon. Not everyone walks out alive, and Grievous windmilled out as a villain to fear once more.



2. CLONE CADETS (S3E1)

A day-in-the-life-of-the-clones episode might not have been high on every fan's wish list before the series, but these instalments proved to be some the series' strongest elements, with the Season Three premiere being a case in point. Detailing the exploits of Domino Squad during their training on Kamino, we see first-hand their experiences, obstacles and the camaraderie they share, all the while possessing the unwelcome knowledge that most of those concerned will die horribly.



3. MORTIS TRILOGY (S3E15-17)

Perhaps the best episode arc in the series, the *Mortis* trilogy highlighted the visual evolution of the series, showcasing how far it had come compared to the TV movie. We got to see a truly immersive story of good and evil play out, with Anakin, Obi-Wan and Ahsoka caught in the middle. *Clone Wars* rarely paused for introspection, but when it did, the results were worth watching. Coupled with a cameo from Liam Neeson as Qui-Gon Jinn, this arc is many fans' favourite.



4. THE CIDATEL ARC (S3E18-20)

Classic espionage movies like *Escape From Alcatraz* are the order of the day here, with Anakin and Obi-Wan (along with a stowaway Ahsoka) leading a mission to rescue a Jedi Master with vital intel – bumping into a Tarkin pre-Grand Moff (but already a bit of a bastard) on the way. Like a number of episodes, it's one you'll wish you could have seen on the big screen, such is the thrilling nature of the action. Plus, it sows the seeds of the Darth Vader/Tarkin dynamic that looms large in *A New Hope*.



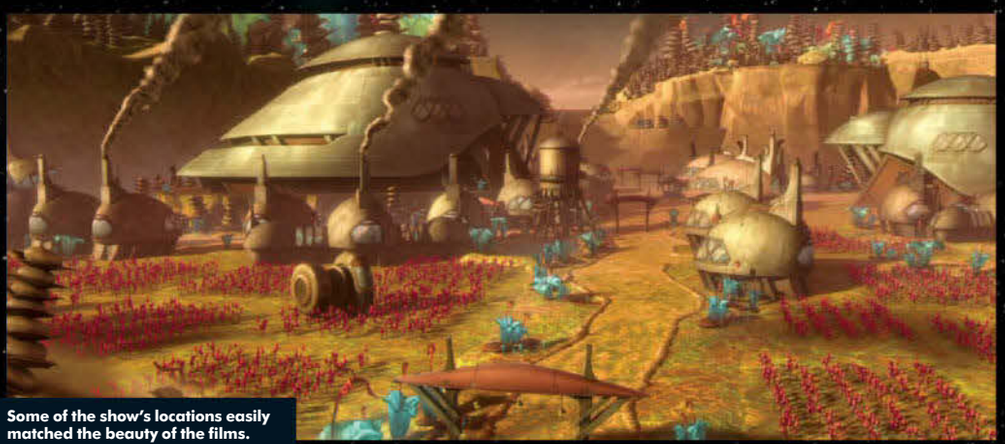
5. THE UMBARA ARC (S4E7-10)

Another succession of episodes in which the Clones took centre stage, this arc highlighted both the excellent work of the writing team and the versatility of Dee Bradley Baker's vocals in making physically identical characters unique. Plunging directly into Joseph Conrad territory, the clones grow suspicious at the methods of their Jedi general, leading them to question their orders for the first time. *Star Wars* is rarely as morally ambiguous as it is here.



insignia. Focusing primarily on action over intrigue – at least initially – this new take on the series was immediately familiar to fans young and old, with some voice actors from the 2D series being retained (most notably Taylor's Obi-Wan, Corey Burton as Count Dooku and Tom Kane as Yoda). However, there was a new hook that would set this series apart: Anakin would be getting his own padawan.

Togrutan female Ahsoka Tano (voiced by Ashley Eckstein) wasn't initially met with the warmest reception by fans, weary of seemingly yet another irritating, Jar Jar-esque creation. Filoni himself admits, "I completely understand the hesitation. When she was pitched to [writer] Henry Gilroy and I by George, our first reaction was 'What do you mean Anakin has a padawan?' And George was like, 'It's something I've wanted to do.' So we had to get on with it pretty quickly if we were going to make it work." Not that Ahsoka was alone in receiving the fans' ire. The overall critical reception to *The Clone Wars* was negative, currently sitting at a paltry 18 per cent on Rotten Tomatoes. As far as attention went, this wasn't exactly the best scenario that could have been envisaged.



Some of the show's locations easily matched the beauty of the films.

Still, things started to look up. The first episode of *The Clone Wars* TV series, 'Ambush', premiered on 3 October 2008 to an overwhelmingly positive reception. Seeing Yoda pitted against Separatist commander Asajj Ventress (a character from the 2D series who had gone on to gain popularity in the Expanded Universe books and comics), it characterised the approach to the rest of the series: rather than focusing on the core cast, it would see different combinations of characters helm entire episodes. While the core triumvirate of Anakin, Obi-Wan and Ahsoka featured the most, they weren't by any means the sole focus, with many previously silent fan favourites being given the chance to shine. 'Lair Of Grievous' saw tentacled Jedi master Kit Fisto and his apprentice attempt to escape the clutches of the titular General, and the 'Malevolence' arc allowed Predator lookalike Plo Koon to get a time to shine. Jar Jar also showed up a few times, but even he was less annoying – only slightly, mind.

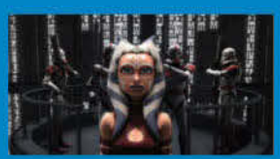
The series' newfound good will extended to Ahsoka. Previously maligned, she became a firm fan favourite, with her mentor/student relationship with Anakin proving to be one of the show's strongest elements – something Filoni claims was never in any doubt. "I knew that kids would accept her outright, because they don't have the history that we do with Anakin. If you think about it, the fans are like Anakin when Anakin meets her. He doesn't want this kid, he's asking why he needs a student. He was the same way."

Arnold Taylor agrees: "She was one of those things people didn't expect at first: 'Oh boy, it's like Short Round in *Temple Of Doom* or something.' She turned out to be this amazing character. Ashley Eckstein is a brilliant actor, a wonderful ambassador for *Star Wars*. She's brought to life a character that was created by Dave Filoni to help save the pain and anguish of



6. THE BOX
(S4E17)

The pick of an arc that sees Obi-Wan fake his death and go undercover in order to foil a plot against Palpatine's life. Again, the series' propensity for impressive visual flourishes was put into focus, with the 1997 film *The Cube* serving the inspiration for the series of deathtraps that Kenobi and the bounty hunters are put through by Count Dooku. Elsewhere, further seeds are sown for *Revenge Of The Sith*, with Anakin's feelings of being mistrusted shown to have basis.



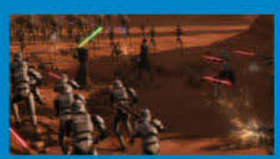
7. THE TRIAL OF AHSOKA
(S5E18-20)

By default the series finale after its sudden cancellation (if we're discounting *The Lost Missions*), this premature end nonetheless works well as a fitting denouement, with Ahsoka ultimately choosing to leave the Order after being falsely accused of murder while the Jedi Council sits idly by. For fans it was a bittersweet moment – sad that she wouldn't become the Jedi she was capable of being, but grateful that she would live to fight another day.



8. THE SHADOW COLLECTIVE ARC
(S5E14-16)

The resurrection of Darth Maul may have seemed like fan service to some, but this arc made his return worthwhile, seeing him descend on Mandalore with some the galaxy's worst people in tow (hello Black Sun from *Shadows Of The Empire*) and turn the planet into a battleground. Seeing Maul go from Sith ronin to crime kingpin is great, but everything pales in comparison to the moment where Darth Sidious shows up to remind him and brother Savage Opress who's boss.



9. LANDING AT POINT RAIN
(S2E5)

War is hell. *The Clone Wars* hammered home this point at every opportunity, but nowhere was it done with as much urgency as here. Seeing the Republic launch a heavy assault on Geonosis, nowhere else is the sheer scale of the conflict as apparent as it is here, with the screen dominated by blaster fire and clones and droids being picked off left, right and centre. This was *Star Wars* by way of *Saving Private Ryan*, and all the more effective for it.



10. BOUNTY HUNTERS
(S2E17)

Probably the most on-the-nose of *The Clone Wars*' classic movie homages, but nonetheless still a great episode, it sees Obi-Wan, Anakin and Ahsoka team up with four bounty hunters to defend a village from Weequay pirate Hondo Ohnaka. Shades of *Seven Samurai* aside, it showed off *The Clone Wars*' welcome tendency to return to the classic *Star Wars* feel, pitting a group of underdogs against seemingly insurmountable odds.

"THE NAME'S AHSOKA TANO"

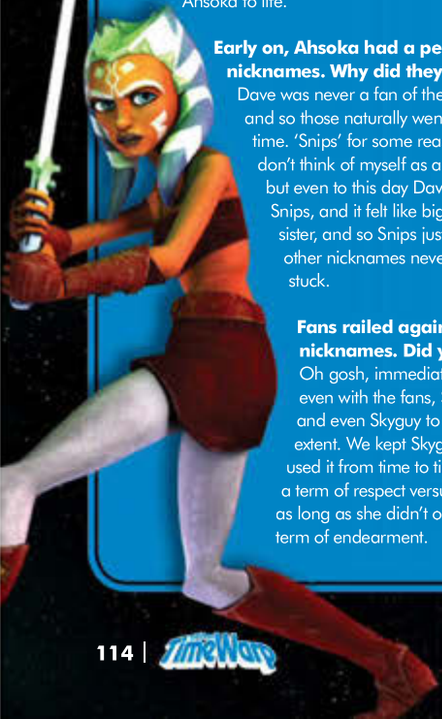
Going from irritating kid to fan favourite, Anakin's spunky padawan was a runaway success story. Voice actress Ashley Eckstein talks becoming a Star Wars institution and winning over fans…

Was it important to you to bring out strong female character qualities in Ahsoka?
I never really approached Ahsoka from the angle of 'Oh, this is a strong female character, so I need to play her that way', I was just so fortunate to be a small part of creating Ahsoka. The writing was superb, and [Dave Filoni and his crew] wrote such great episodes that I just had to bring life to the words that were on the page. The funny thing was that Ahsoka's gender didn't matter at the end of the day, because Dave didn't write towards that, and I think that is the key to the success of writing a strong female character; just making her a strong character, male or female, and David and his crew did that. If you think about it, we never pointed out that she was a girl. I don't think the term came up in the text, no one in the crew pointed out that she was a girl; she was just one of the gang, and I think the fans after a while looked past her gender.

Did you have much input to her characterisation?
I did have a lot of input with creating the character, her sound and attitude. Part of the reason I was cast was obviously the sound of my voice, but even just her attitude I brought to the auditions. Originally, Dave wanted Ahsoka to have an Icelandic accent. I didn't do a good job in the original audition – in fact, I was terrible – I didn't even think I would get a callback.

Fortunately, I did, and once again they asked to prepare in an Icelandic accent. I went to the audition, read the first line in an accent, and they stopped me and said, "Okay, that's still not quite right, we want you to more in an Icelandic accent." I was so confused, because I was doing it in an Icelandic accent! And so I said, "I'm sorry, I am, so I'm not quite sure what you want!" They said that they liked my attitude and body movement, so I was cast a lot more just for being myself than my actual audition.

So when I went in to record, thank god they told me to record in my normal voice. They liked how I could be snarky but not disrespectful, sarcastic but not offensive. I always felt the freedom that if a line was delivered in a certain way, I could say, "I don't think Ahsoka would say it that way." So it was a collaborative process, and I feel like I'm one part of a group of people who brought Ahsoka to life.



Early on, Ahsoka had a penchant for nicknames. Why did they disappear?
Dave was never a fan of the nicknames, and so those naturally went away over time. 'Snips' for some reason stuck, I don't think of myself as a snippy person, but even to this day Dave will call me Snips, and it felt like big brother/little sister, and so Snips just stuck, but the other nicknames never felt like they stuck.

Fans railed against some nicknames. Did you notice?
Oh gosh, immediately! It's funny, even with the fans, Snips stuck, and even Skyguy to a certain extent. We kept Skyguy – Ahsoka used it from time to time – it became a term of respect versus disrespect as long as she didn't overuse it, like a term of endearment.

What was it like to work with George Lucas?
I have had the pleasure of meeting George five or six times. While they make the show, we recorded our episodes in LA. The first time I met him was at the premiere of the film. I always found myself tongue tied, because I'm a massive *Star Wars* fan, and it's George Lucas – what else do you say other than 'Thank you'? He was always very complimentary, he was very involved in the *Clone Wars*. He was always so kind and positive and appreciative of everything. We would get notes from him, but it would always be through Dave Filoni. He would always say, 'George wants it to be more like this…' or 'George has this vision for the scene'. I would joke that he was like Charlie from *Charlie's Angels*.

Do you feel a tinge of regret at not being able to finish Ahsoka's story, with the early cancellation?
We were a family, and worked together for over seven years – there was definitely a lot of sadness, but the good news about Disney buying *Star Wars* is all of the content that will now be created, a movie a year moving forward. We're getting more TV shows, animated shows and books.

Who was your favourite character?
I loved that we got more insight into the character of Anakin. In prequels we see young Anakin, slightly whiny Anakin and Dark Side Anakin – we didn't get to see the moment when he was just a hero. Matt Lanter brought so much likeability to the character – he's such a brilliant actor, we've only seen a glimpse of what he's capable of. He's a huge part of the reason why people fell in love with Anakin in *The Clone Wars*.

How does it feel to be a part of *The Clone Wars*, and to continue to do so in *Star Wars: Rebels*?
It's such an honour. When you realise that we're a part of the last *Star Wars* story George Lucas told, it's an honour. I feel like I won the lottery by being Ahsoka and being able to help create this original character. I've never taken it for granted; I always appreciate the opportunity I've been given. It is definitely my role that I'm most proud of, and by far the favourite thing I've ever done. It's a dream come true to continue to bring Ahsoka to life.



Eckstein only has fond memories of her time on *The Clone Wars*.

Anakin Skywalker turning to the Dark Side. If you look at it in that regard, she's a pivotal part of not just *The Clone Wars*, but the *Star Wars* legacy."

In turn, a side effect of Ahsoka's influence was that Anakin himself grew as a character. Previously, fans had seen him as a whiny kid, a whiny padawan and a whiny Jedi-turned-traitor and serial killer. Here, people finally got to see the heroic, jovial Anakin we had all heard about but never seen. Taylor is unambiguous in his opinion of why this is the case. "Matt Lanter brought a whole new side to Anakin," he says. "I hear so many people say, 'That's my Anakin Skywalker right there, because of what Matt was able to bring to the character."

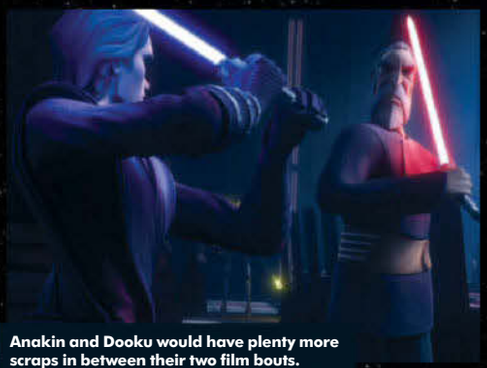
Speaking to **SciFiNow** back in 2010, Lanter himself was similarly forthright in detailing his approach to playing the future Darth Vader. "To be honest, I kind of blind myself a little bit to knowing that I kill a bunch of kids. That's really detrimental. Having said that, I know that Anakin goes down this dark spiral. But at the same time I feel like we've done a good job of establishing Anakin as a hero. It kind of makes it more sad for the character."

Season Two, marketed under the sub-heading 'Rise Of The Bounty Hunters', saw the show venture into darker territory, most notably via the on-the-nose 'Brain Invaders', in which parasitic, mind-controlling worms enter unfortunate occupants' minds through their nostrils. Above all else though, it was about fan service. While Boba Fett was still too young in the continuity at this point to suit up, there was the opportunity to take a look at the society that birthed his kind. "I loved the Manadlorian arc," says Taylor. "I thought those were fantastic stories."



Such was the strength of the writing that even Jar Jar was made tolerable.

"I HEAR SO MANY SAY, 'THAT'S MY ANAKIN RIGHT THERE', BECAUSE OF WHAT MATT BROUGHT TO THE CHARACTER" JAMES ARNOLD TAYLOR



Anakin and Dooku would have plenty more scraps in between their two film bouts.



The return of Darth Maul was one of the show's highlights.



R2-D2, the saga's one real constant, remained a regular fixture.



Much of the show was morally ambiguous, with the Jedi themselves occasionally being the villains.



Similarly, both characters old and new showed up. Bounty hunter Aurra Sing (the *Phantom Menace* extra who took on a new life in the comics) and Bossk (he of glowering in *The Empire Strikes Back* fame) appeared, although the accolade of show-stealer went to an entirely new creation: Cad Bane. "George bought [Cad Bane] to the forefront," recalls Filoni. "He said he'd like a character named Cad Bane, to look like [Western film actor] Lee van Cleef, a bit with the low-brimmed hat. He's a really interesting one."

Yet it wasn't just the bounty hunters who stole the show. Season Three, 'Secrets Revealed' saw the clone troopers brought to the forefront, with episodes like 'Clone Cadets' and 'ARC troopers' showing the clone hierarchy and training on Kamino in a whole new light. The (mostly) nameless cannon fodder of the films were given names and unique personalities (if all possessing the same face), which again goes to show the quality of the voice actors portraying them. Ashley Eckstein remembers, "My goodness, to see Dee Bradley Baker play god knows how many clones and differentiate them all, it was truly unbelievable."

For many, the third season would be its strongest yet, featuring some truly excellent episode arcs. If 'Monster' and 'Witches Of The Mist' were slightly ham-fisted attempts at unnecessary fan service – introducing Darth Maul's previously unmentioned brother, Savage Opress – and the presence of Chewbacca in 'Wookiee Hunt' was utterly unnecessary, if fun, it was made up for by the visually outstanding three-episode 'Mortis' arc. Seeing Anakin, Obi-Wan and Ahsoka stranded in a mysterious planet-sized sphere, they are soon caught up in the machinations of The Father, who is locked in a seemingly never-ending struggle to balance the diametrically opposing Force powers of the Light Side-wielding Daughter and the Dark-infused Son (voiced by Sam Witwer, best remembered as Sith apprentice Starkiller in *The Force Unleashed* videogames). All three Jedi would face challenges: Obi-Wan being warned by the spirit of his fallen mentor Qui-Gon Jinn (a role reprised by Liam Neeson); Ahsoka appraised of her potential path by her older self, and Anakin tormented by visions of his horrific destiny.

"My favourite episode arc was the 'Mortis' trilogy," recalls Eckstein. "The story was fascinating, and for Ahsoka to go from older Ahsoka to Dark Side Ahsoka, it was so much fun to do those episodes, and to do them with Anakin and Obi-Wan. It was the first episode Sam Witwer did with us – he was brilliant."

Similarly, the three-episode 'Citadel' arc came in for acclaim, seeing a team sent to the seemingly inescapable Citadel prison to rescue Jedi Master Even Piell. As well as being the latest in a line of episodes that harked back to classic cinema with its air of *The Guns Of Navarone* (Season Two episode 'Bounty Hunters' was essentially a remake of Akira Kurosawa classic *Seven Samurai*, even being dedicated to the late director), it would see the first real challenge to established canon, with Piell's death contradicting his demise in the previously released *Jedi Twilight* book. Moreover, the future Grand Moff Tarkin appeared as a smug but tactically savvy Republic officer, who prophetically starts a friendship with Anakin in an only ever-so-slightly on the nose bit of foreshadowing.

Season Four saw things venture into even darker territory, combining elements from previous seasons.

The four-episode 'Umbara' arc saw the series venture into *Apocalypse Now* territory via the unhinged Jedi Master Pong Krell, while the 'Kadavo' arc continued this trend in its depiction of slavery – all the while sowing the seeds for Anakin's descent into darkness. This would continue in 'The Box', in which an undercover Obi-Wan looks to foil a plot against the Chancellor's life, with Anakin being kept in the dark, further adding fuel to the feelings of not being trusted he displays in *Revenge Of The Sith*. "I love 'The Box'," says Taylor. "It reminds me of that sci-fi movie *The Cube* – it was like a *Twilight Zone* episode."

By far biggest moment of the season though – and arguably of the entire show – was the return of Darth Maul. Last seen tumbling in pieces in *The Phantom Menace*, his survival was revealed in Season Three, with 'Brothers' seeing him brought back to sanity by his brother, ready anew with a grudge against Obi-Wan. Witwer returned to the show after his run on the 'Mortis' arc and took on vocal duties yet again – something Taylor recalls fondly.

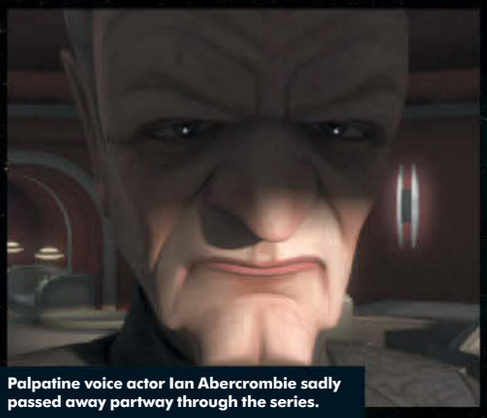
"Sam is great, a brilliant actor," remembers Taylor. "He's an immense *Star Wars* fan – he knows everything there is to know. He will correct Filoni and the writers, even in the middle of sessions!"

Maul's survival would eventually spill over into Season Five, culminating in the death of Satine – Obi-Wan's former love interest – in 'The Lawless'. "Anna Graves played Satine – she's such a fun, wonderful person," says Taylor. "In Season Five, that stuff with Darth Maul, Obi-Wan and Satine, it was so powerful. It was very emotional to do those."



The Mortis episodes were some of the show's most acclaimed moments.

However, despite the show's popularity, things weren't to last. On 31 October 2012, Disney bought Lucasfilm for the princely sum of $4.05 billion (£2.5 billion), with a new trilogy of films being announced. But while the future of the series was ensured, there was a catch. A number of properties in development or due for release were immediately scrapped or put on hold indefinitely, with videogame *Star Wars 1313* (elements of which would later show up in *The Clone Wars*) and spoof animated series *Star Wars: Detours*



Palpatine voice actor Ian Abercrombie sadly passed away partway through the series.



Many of the show's events directly foreshadowed important moments in the films.



Thanks to the premature end, the fate of many characters – like Darth Maul – was left open.



One of the most popular new characters was bounty hunter Cad Bane.



One of the strengths of *The Clone Wars* was the way in which it captured the horror of war.

SOMETHING FAMILIAR I SENSE

Five famous faces to lend their tones to The Clone Wars

1. SIMON PEGG

Fans may have recognised bounty hunter Dengar from his blink-and-you'll-miss-it role in *The Empire Strikes Back*, but everyone else remembered geek king Simon Pegg.

2. DAVID TENNANT

The Tenth Doctor shows up as assistant droid Huyang, who helps prospective Jedi with assembling their lightsabers. Tennant later won an Emmy for his portrayal.

3. KATEE SACKHOFF

Best remembered for kicking ass as Starbuck in *Battlestar Galactica*, there are more than a few shades of Kara Thrace in hard-as-nails Manadlorian warrior Bo-Katan.

4. RON PERLMAN

The *Hellboy* star lent his vocals to gravelly Trandoshan scavenger Gha Nachkt, who meets his demise after making the mistake of attempting to extort General Grievous.

5. JON FAVREAU

Iron Man's Happy Hogan voices Mandalorian Pre Vizsla, tough enough to go toe-to-toe with the likes of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Maul.

"WE WERE ALL DISAPPOINTED WE DIDN'T FINISH THE WAY WE WANTED TO FINISH. WE WANTED TO GO FOR EIGHT SEASONS"

JAMES ARNOLD TAYLOR

being among the casualties. By far the biggest scalp, however, was *The Clone Wars*. Allowed to run until the end of its fifth season, with the completed Season Six episodes (13 in total) later being made available on **starwars.com**, the series ends with Ahsoka Tano leaving the Order, strolling out of the Jedi Temple in a way that directly mirrors Anakin's own storming of the Temple in *Revenge Of The Sith*. Although this visage ended the series on a strong yet poignant note, it wasn't the one they originally had in mind.

"I want to be fair, and I understand that it's business for everybody, but I think we were all disappointed that we didn't get to finish the way we wanted to finish," says Taylor. "We wanted to go on for eight seasons, really finish off those storylines and where the characters go. I felt they could have taken *Clone Wars* up to December 2015, done *The Force Awakens*, and then come out with a show like *Rebels* after.

"At the same time, *Rebels* is great and people are enjoying it, but we had a lot of stories to tell still, and I think it's a shame we didn't get to finish them, but that's the way business is sometimes. It hurts still, because it's the one show I've been on where all of us could have done it for the rest of our careers, so it's hard to say goodbye to that."

Saying that, the spirit of *The Clone Wars* lives on in the form of the aforementioned *Star Wars: Rebels*, still helmed by Filoni. The series retains its nods to the original series, with Taylor returning in the premiere to voice Obi-Wan ("I got to deliver the message he leaves that we never got to see in the movies, warning all the other Jedi. I think it was pretty cool to get to do that!) and latterly an older Ahsoka showing up in the Season One finale. With Darth Vader poised for a bigger role in Season Two, it almost seems as if the old gang are back together again.

Closing things off, Taylor is adamantly proud of the legacy left behind by *The Clone Wars*. "I'm very proud of it. It was an adult cartoon, but something kids could watch, and that was the brilliance of it, that it was just like the original *Star Wars*, something that anybody could find something in to relate to. I am very humbled and happy to be involved with it, and blessed to be in the *Star Wars* family to this day."



It's testament to voice actor Dee Bradley Baker's skills that the clones all stood apart.



A young Boba Fett (voiced by original actor Daniel Logan) shows up in Season Two.

WHEN WESLEY SNIPES TOOK THE ROLE OF BLADE, HE TRANSFORMED INTO THE CUSSING, SWORD-WIELDING, LEATHER-WEARING, BAD-ASS COMIC-BOOK MOVIE HERO FANS HOLD IN HIGH ESTEEM. WE LOOK AT WHAT MAKES BLADE SO ENTERTAINING…

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

TimeWarp Retro Classic Film

BLADE



Film

RUNNING TIME: 120 minutes
RELEASE DATE: 21 August 1998
DIRECTOR: Stephen Norrington
WRITER: David S Goyer
CAST: Wesley Snipes, Stephen Dorff, Kris Kristofferson, N'Bushe Wright, Donal Logue

About

When a young woman is bitten by a vampire during pregnancy and requires an emergency C-section, her life hangs in the balance. She dies before ever seeing her newborn child. But the child grows up to be a rare breed known as a Daywalker; part human, part vampire, he possesses the superhuman abilities of the creatures that killed his mother as well as their thirst for blood. Instead of joining them, he vows to defeat them to protect the human race. He is Blade. With the help of his mentor Whistler and bitten blood doctor Karen Jenson, Blade sets out to stop a vampire who threatens to take things too far.

As far as memorable movie openings go, *Blade*'s first scenes are right up there with Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and the dawn of man in *2001: A Space Odyssey* and Drew Barrymore's chilling phone conversations in *Scream*.

In stark contrast to the very first scene, which features a woman who is subjected to an emergency C-section having been bitten by a vampire, we follow a young man into a nightclub. He's lured in by a beautiful, apparently human woman, and struts through the crowd in time to the pounding techno music. Despite the abundance of clubbers, nobody wants to club with him. He's caught in a dancing crowd of hostility.

Suddenly, there's red on his hands. Licking it off, he confirms that it's blood. The DJ cranks up the tempo. The banner behind him reads 'BLOODBATH'. The sprinklers kick in and there's blood everywhere. The young man is surrounded by vampires. They're dancing in the blood, drinking the blood, and smearing it over their bodies. That pretty much sets the tone for the rest of the movie: ridiculous, bloody and completely over the top, but awesomely entertaining.

"TO BE HONEST, BLADE STILL FEELS LIKE A SPOOF"

Wesley Snipes' first entrance as Blade is also pretty special. Leathered, buckled and fully armed, he stomps right into the middle of the vampire rave. Half vampire, half human, he's what they call a Daywalker. He has the superhuman strengths possessed by all vampires but none of their weaknesses, besides a lust for blood. Basically, he is untouchable. He shoots up that joint and tackles a group of vampire assassins with nothing but a sword and his own sharp wits. Almost two hours and many violent and bloody deaths later, Blade is a legend.

Though it ended up becoming a New Line Cinema production, Marvel Studios started to develop the film way back in 1992, six years before its first cinema release. Back then, rapper LL Cool J was interested in playing the lead role. But for reasons unknown, the film switched hands to New Line, and LL Cool J's Daywalker dreams were quashed forever. With the new production company came a new script, which was written by a then up and coming screenwriter called David S Goyer. At the time, Goyer only had badly received action and sci-fi films under his belt, including *Death Warrant, Kickboxer 2, Demonic Toys, The Puppet Master, The Crow: City Of Angels* and *Dark City* (which, to be fair, wasn't bad). Now, of course, he's known as the beast that wrote Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy and Zack Snyder's *Man Of Steel*, but it was his work on *Blade, Blade II* and *Blade: Trinity* (which he also directed) that set him on the path to genre superstar status.

Before Goyer started on the script for *Blade*, New Line wanted to make the film into something that was almost a spoof, but Goyer managed to convince them otherwise. To be honest, *Blade* still feels like a spoof, with its ultra-violent massacres and 'so cheesy they're cool' quips and one-liners. That's the thing about *Blade*: it's simultaneously lame and completely awesome. A scene that sums this fact up nicely is Karen Jenson's encounter with Krieger in her apartment.

When Karen returns home after her first meeting with Blade, there's already someone there. It's a cop who introduces himself as Officer Krieger of the 42nd precinct. The "door was open." He's just there on a "routine check." Sure you are, pal. Karen hears him out. He explains how her co-workers at the hospital said that she was kidnapped the night before. The other doctor she was with, Curtis Webb, died. But she shouldn't worry about that right now.

"Why?" Karen asks. Krieger suddenly switches from good cop to bad cop. "Because you're dead too, bitch!" he snarls, and starts to attack her. Karen whips out a bottle of mace and sprays him square in the face. Krieger squirms about for a while before realising he hasn't ⇨



Meet Blade: part vampire, part human.



CLASSIC QUOTES

"SOME MOTHERFUCKERS ARE ALWAYS TRYING TO ICE-SKATE UPHILL"
BLADE

"I'M GONNA BE NAUGHTY! I'M GONNA BE A NAUGHTY VAMPIRE GOD!"
QUINN

"MOTHERFUCKER! ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR DAMN MIND?"
BLADE

"YOU GIVE FROST A MESSAGE FROM ME. YOU TELL HIM IT'S OPEN SEASON ON ALL SUCKHEADS"
BLADE

"FROST IS TRYING TO TRIGGER A FUCKING VAMPIRE APOCALYPSE"
WHISTLER

"FOR FUCK'S SAKE, THESE PEOPLE ARE OUR FOOD, NOT OUR ALLIES!"
DEACON FROST

"CHRIST! I'M TOO OLD FOR THIS! SOMEBODY GET ME A GODDAMN WHEELCHAIR!"
WHISTLER

"I WAS BORN A VAMPIRE, AS WAS EVERY MEMBER OF THIS HOUSE. BUT YOU, FROST… YOU WERE MERELY TURNED"
DRAGONETTI

"THERE ARE WORSE THINGS OUT TONIGHT THAN VAMPIRES"
BLADE

"HAVE THE GOOD GRACE TO DIE WITH SOME FUCKING DIGNITY"
DEACON FROST

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Blood splatters over the text make this a bit hard to read in plces?

actually been blinded. "What is this, garlic?" he laughs. "He said it would work against vampires," she says. It's cheesy and ridiculous, but exciting and awesome. But that's not even the best/worst bit.

After a dramatic entrance and a well-timed one-line, Blade whacks Krieger around the head. "You used me as bait?" asks Karen, scandalised. "Get over it," says Blade, and beats Krieger up some more. Justice is served, mofo. It's awful but beautiful, and brings a tear to the eye for many different, complicated reasons.

Part of what makes *Blade* so awesome is the casting. Stephen Dorff is weird and chilling as the Big Bad vampire Deacon Frost (a role which was apparently first offered to Jet Li). Kris Kristofferson is spot on as Blade's wizened and quip-throwing mentor and weaponsmith Abraham Whistler. N'Bushe Wright is charming and fierce as haematologist-turned-almost-

"MANY SNIPES FANS CONSIDER BLADE HIS BEST WORK"

vampire Dr Karen Jenson. As for Wesley Snipes as our enigmatic protagonist Eric 'Blade' Brookes, many Snipes fans, if not all of them, consider *Blade* to be his best work. The character is what he became best known for, and La Magra knows he hasn't acted in anything as interesting since. *Blade*'s action-heavy storyline and dark themes gave Snipes the opportunity to show off both his athletic prowess and his ability to act tortured and emotionally scarred in 300 different variations. It also helps that Snipes looks damn fantastic in Blade's shades. Can you imagine LL Cool J rocking a pair of sun specs with those dimples? Don't think so.

Before Snipes was cast as the vampire hunter, New Line actually had their eye on a couple of other actors, including Denzel Washington and Laurence Fishburne. But in Goyer's mind, Snipes was always the perfect choice. And as if he couldn't get any cooler, he's a martial artist in real life as well as in the film, having started training when he was 12 years old. He's now a fifth dan black belt in Shotokan (a hardcore style of karate) and a second dan black belt in Hapikido (a highly eclectic Korean martial art). Wow, Snipes, wow.

Though *Blade* wasn't made by Marvel Studios, and pre-dates the Marvel Cinematic Universe, it's still technically Marvel. It was too good a concept for them to skip completely, so Marvel Studios' mother enterprise Marvel Entertainment acted as an on-the-side production company with New Line Cinema. There's also the whole thing of it being based on a Marvel character that ties it together.

Eric 'Blade' Brookes made his first appearance as a supporting character in the comic *The Tomb Of Dracula* in 1973. He was created by writer and artist team Marv Wolfman and Gene Colan, and went on to star and co-star in several other different comic-book series. In the early days, Blade was more of an everyman. He wasn't originally a vampire-human hybrid – he was a man that developed immunity to vampire bites. As a result, he didn't have



The success of *Blade* led to two further sequels.



***Blade* can lay claim to being the first truly great Marvel movie.**

QUIPS AND GRAVY

The 5 best quip masters of comic book movies

1 MR FREEZE (BATMAN & ROBIN)



We all love a good pun anyway, but lines like "Tonight's forecast: a freeze is coming", "Ice to see you" and "Chill" bypass cheesy and become works of art. What more can we expect from Arnie?

2 THOR (THOR)



When he's in the right mood, everything that comes out of the God of Thunder's mouth both beautiful and hilarious. It's that semi-Shakespearean repartee. It really gives him the winning edge over everyone else.

3 CATWOMAN (BATMAN RETURNS)



Selina Kyle's suggestive and pun-heavy quips often invoke a weird state of being between arousal and absolute terror, which is most likely what makes her so lethal. And we love it.



Refreshingly, it didn't stint on blood and gore like other adaptations.

the superhuman speed and strength he possesses in the film. He had to rely on his skill and wits until he was finally bitten by Morbius the Living Vampire, and become the Daywalker. His weapons were also a bit different, with Wolfman and Colan opting for teakwood knives and mahogany stakes, which he would use to impale his opponents. Later on, he acquired a larger arsenal consisting of a variety of bladed weapons like long swords and katanas, flamethrowers, and UV and silver-based weapons. But he still had the leather coat and shades.

Despite the huge impact Wolfman and Colan had on both Blade the character and *Blade* the franchise, the pair only received a 'based on the characters by' credit in the film. Wolfman subsequently sued Marvel Comics over ownership of *Blade*, but ultimately lost out. As a result, he and Colan weren't even mentioned in the credits of *Blade II*.

Also disappointingly, Stan Lee originally filmed a cameo as a cop in the bloodbath club scene, but it was deleted from the final cut. It would have been his second ever Marvel comic-book movie cameo after *The Trial Of The Incredible Hulk* in 1989.



Stephen Dorff takes on villain duties as Deacon Frost.



Kris Kristofferson plays Blade's mentor Whistler.



WATCH FIRST



THE TERMINATOR (1984)

Blade's costume, strut and intensity are all reminiscent of everyone's favourite cyborg assassin.

WATCH NEXT



WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS (2014)

The film's vampires aren't as intense, but they are all Wesley Snipes fans.

TONY STARK/IRON MAN
(IRON MAN)



4 Tony Stark? More like Tony SNARK, amirite? Every word that comes out of his mouth, as Iron Man or the CEO of Stark Industries, is absolutely dripping in his usual sarcasm and irony.

DRAX THE DESTROYER
(GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY)



5 The most hilarious member of the *Guardians Of The Galaxy* team, though perhaps unintentionally, Drax's greatest hits include "I'm not a princess" and "I would cut his head clean off".

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"At the time, it seems to come out of nowhere and was awesome – great set-up, great anti-hero and Snipes nailed it. Loved it." **@Darck**



"The movies? The first two are fantastic. Snipes' last really enjoyable films." **@jeffbiscuits**



"Excellent film with a great sequel and a so-so third movie." **@quidditysea**



"The best series. They started the trend of 'cool' and good superhero movies, not like *Iron Man*." **@SpeedForce1973**



"I've not seen it in a while but it was good." **@Dianeofthedead**



"The Snipes movies? The best… started this Marvel Studios shit." **@Wastedtheshow**



"Fantastic movie with Snipes in his best ever roll. Oodles of visual style, can't believe S Norrington has quit movies!" **@johnnyalucard**



"I love it! One of the best vampire movies out there." **@SongWarmonger**



"The opening club scene is one of the best opening scenes ever IMHO." **@TheAhmedRaafat**



"Love it. Great film. Can you believe it's now 17 years old?!" **@dept42**



"One word: awesome." **@gwoman9810**



"Blade is a pretty iconic film, a film that I have and would re-watch." **@Cascararogue**



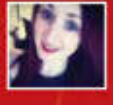
"I love the first, snuck in to see the sequel underaged and loved that too (even with some ropey CGI). Snipes at his best." **@Kieferzoidy**



"*Blade* contains the best Kris Kristofferson quote ever! You'll know when you hear it. #NSFW" **@doctorfodder**



"*Blade* is awesome! We need more! Bring back Snipes, bring back Snipes, bring back Snipes!" **@The_LizMarshall**

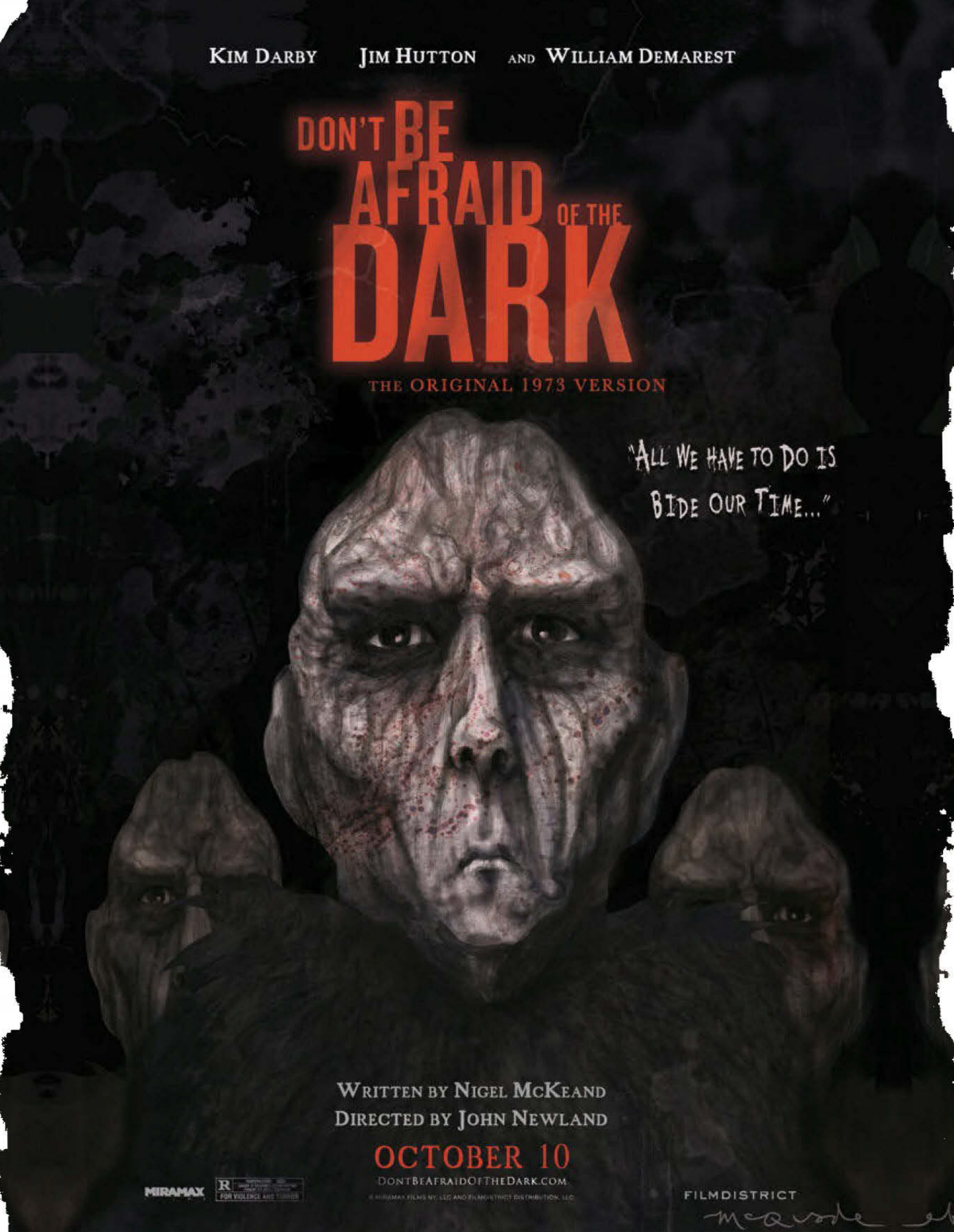


"Loved it! Might have to go home and whack the trilogy on!" **@ToniMarie1991**

KIM DARBY JIM HUTTON AND WILLIAM DEMAREST

DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK

THE ORIGINAL 1973 VERSION



WRITTEN BY NIGEL MCKEAND
DIRECTED BY JOHN NEWLAND

OCTOBER 10

DONTBEAFRAIDOFTHEDARK.COM

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FLASHBACK

DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK

A GUILLERMO DEL TORO CHILDHOOD FAVOURITE, THE ORIGINAL 1973 TV-MOVIE HORROR CLASSIC BROUGHT TERROR STRAIGHT INTO THE LIVING ROOM, GIVING GOOD REASON TO BE AFRAID OF THE DARK, AS LEADING LADY KIM DARBY REVEALS

WORDS **OLIVER PFEIFFER**

There was something about Seventies TV movies that could seriously chill the spine and quicken the heart. Whether it was the terrifying predicament of a man against a monstrous truck that provided the gripping premise of Steven Spielberg's debut feature *Duel*, Karen Black locked inside an apartment with a murderous Zuni fetish doll in the tense 'Amelia' segment of *Trilogy Of Terror* or Lauren Hutton being terrorised by an unseen peeping tom neighbour in John Carpenter's suspenseful *Someone's Watching Me!* – this era produced a clutch of low-budget TV fright flicks that lodged deep inside the collective consciousness to form nostalgically recalled cult classic status.

Among this fondly remembered small-screen assemblage comfortably sits John Newland's 1973 creature horror feature *Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark*, a 74-minute lesson in economical chills and suspense that even gave a young Guillermo del Toro nightmares. "I saw this movie as a kid, and it was the scariest evening movie I ever saw… my brothers and I would pursue each other around the house, saying 'Sallly, Sallly'!" said the filmmaker, echoing the eerie whispering chants of the mischievous critters at the heart of the story.

Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark concerns a young married couple who inherit an ancient crumbling mansion in need of renovation. In the mysteriously locked and secrecy-shrouded basement, Sally, (played by original *True Grit* child star Kim Darby) discovers a sealed fireplace that the estate's ancient, cankerous caretaker Mr Harris (William Demarest) warns is best left alone. Spurred on by curiosity, Sally later manages to pry open the ash door that plunges down to a deep darkened sub-basement. Unbeknownst to her, she has opened a gateway to a horde of miniature demonic, light-sensitive creatures that want her soul.

"I relate to fear, but not so much the fear that someone is around my house or horror fear – just being fundamentally fearful. That little chip in me is rather easy to touch," admits Darby. "The character wasn't crazy and she definitely tried to get people to understand her, and you know how hard that was."

Indeed, despite encounters with the creatures, who chant her name, pull her dress, try and trip her down the stairs and harass her underneath a table during a dinner party, nobody believes our poor protagonist's claims that something fearsome has been tormenting her. The angst-ridden central character that nobody believes became a staple of the Seventies TV fright flick, and Darby pulls it off commendably in *Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark*. But the foreboding wouldn't work if the movie monsters didn't live up to expectations.

> "I'M SURPRISED BY HOW MY COMMITMENT OF BEING FRIGHTENED BY IT ALL CAME OFF"
> KIM DARBY

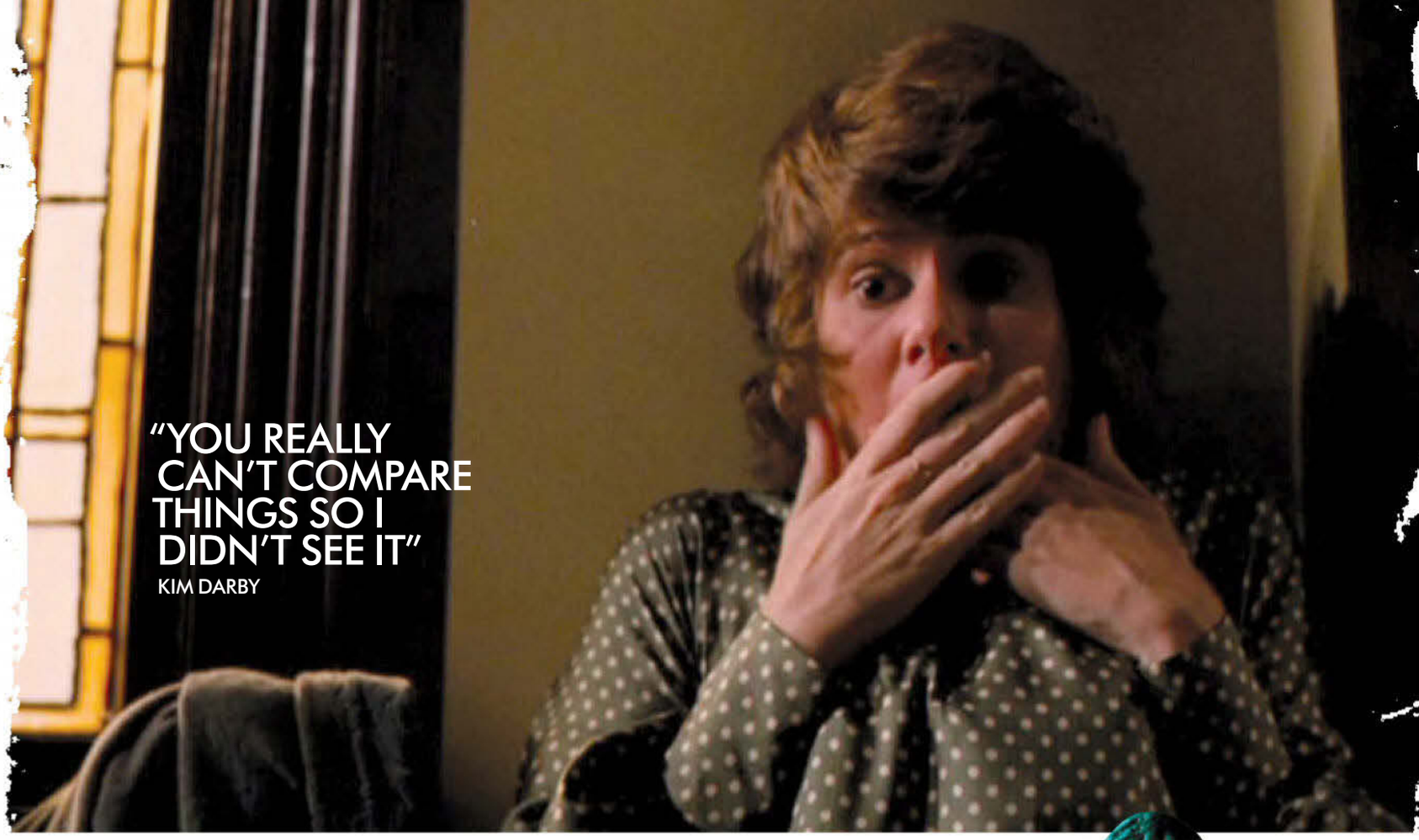


Suppressing their full appearance for at least 30 minutes (during a suitably tense nod-to-*Psycho* shower scene), the creatures are revealed to be pint-sized, goblin-like demons who scurry around in the dark with cut-throat razors and coat hangers, which they use to conveniently turn off light switches. With no special-effects budget, a trio of dwarfs-in-suits brought the creatures to life, filmed – *Land Of The Giants* style – interacting with custom-built giant sets. "Those were real little people," remembers Darby. "Their lung capacity was very small, so we had to be very careful that the costumes wouldn't affect their breathing at all. They were wonderful and very willing to work hard."

Also working hard was director John Newland, a veteran of such television classics as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and the Boris Karloff-hosted gothic horror anthology series *Thriller*. The filmmaker injected atmospheric Hitchcockian suspense into proceedings, thanks to creepily confined sets, clever use of shadows and silhouettes, intense primary colour filtered lighting (somewhat anticipating Dario Argento's *Suspiria*) and a chilling score from Emmy award-winning *Duel* composer Billy Goldenberg.

But perhaps the biggest chills came from the eerie whispering chants of the creatures themselves, voiced by the film's scribe Nigel McKeand. Such haunting lines as "Free, free, free – she set us free!" or "Sally, we're waiting for you – we want you, we want you!" which were usually followed by maniacal laughter, etched into audiences' mind long after the end credits rolled.

Apparently, there wasn't anything spooky about the film's two-week production, however. "I just remember that we went about things like we did back in the day – very pragmatically," remembers Darby. "There was certainly nothing scary happening while we were filming it. John made it very simple, and I'm surprised by how my commitment of really being frightened



"YOU REALLY CAN'T COMPARE THINGS SO I DIDN'T SEE IT"
KIM DARBY

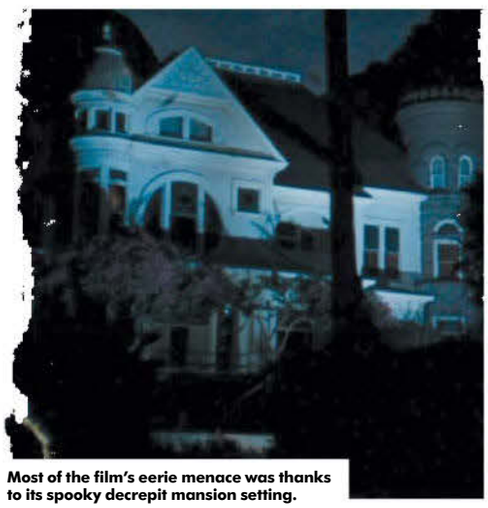
by it all came off. I had no idea it was going to be as frightening as it was to people."

Perhaps it's the simplicity and inherent restrictions imposed upon a limited TV production budget that concentrated the fear factor and lent a tangible urgency to proceedings. The stripped-down production – devoid of special effects and fancy set design – arguably helped to evoke realism and an unnerving quality difficult to replicate today. Indeed, for all its kinetic CG cartoon creatures, lavish production design and elaborate camerawork, the Guillermo del Toro-produced 2010 remake is an inventive but ultimately inferior rehash. Also, by attempting to articulate the mythology behind the ancient antagonists and their sinister motivations, the remake somewhat hindered their nightmarish mystical power.

"I haven't seen the remake," admits Darby. "I think remakes can be as good as the original, but it's two different kinds of friends – it's a different time and a different filmmaker. You really can't compare things so I didn't see it."

An interesting aspect of the glossy remake, however, is how it suggests the mischievous critters are an unconscious metaphor for all the built-up tensions within a shattered family unit. In comic book artist-turned-debut-director Troy Nixey's updated version, Sally (Bailee Madison) is a lonely child from a divorced family who feels neglected and has a difficult relationship with her workaholic architect father Alex (Guy Pearce), rejects his kindly girlfriend Kim (named after Darby and played by Katie Holmes) and tries to initially befriend the creatures no one else believes exists.

In the 1973 film, Sally is a young housewife married to a career-consumed husband (Jim Hutton) who refuses to believe her stories. The 'imaginings' are seen as a cry for desperate attention from a lonely, dutiful housewife who is essentially sidelined by a husband, who appears to take her for granted.



Most of the film's eerie menace was thanks to its spooky decrepit mansion setting.



The creatures were portrayed by a trio of dwarfs-in-suits.

A turning point arrives when Sally decides she's going to stop ramping and raving and plans to leave the house. After the creatures murder her interior designer, (tripping over a wire-trap that was meant for her), Sally confronts them and pleads with them to tell her what they want. "We want you Sally – it's your spirit we want. Come live with us!" is their haunting response.

[Spoiler warning for the film's conclusion!]

The creatures will stop at nothing to accomplish their unsettling desires. Despite her determination to leave, the creatures manage to cut the power, drug and incarcerate Sally. After summoning her downstairs they tie her up, dragging her down to the basement and into the fireplace, where she ultimately surrenders herself to them. Having now eerily eloped with the creatures, we hear Sally's reassurances to them that more people will come to set them free and that they "Have lots of time. All the time in the world, all the time in the world…" mimicking the creatures' title sequence dialogue.

"I think she feels very apart from others and very lonely," considers Darby on the inevitable consequences of that unnervingly downbeat conclusion. "I think she's desperately trying not to be a victim, but perhaps there's some side to her that wanted to go there. May be she felt it was safer there than where she was – with nobody believing her, which leads into 'are you in the right mind?' territory. It was perhaps some kind of relief to her and some sense of she belonged somewhere."

With such a creepy, nihilistic ending, it's understandable why the film gave children of the Seventies the heebie-jeebies. "I think it was maybe something they weren't expecting," continues Darby. "It hooked the audience, and they took the ride the rest of the way. It really connected with people, and it's amazing what one can do [with so little time and budget] to entertain an audience."

So successful was the film with audiences that *Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark* eventually received a theatrical



The film borrows from Hitchcock and stylistically appears to anticipate Dario Argento's *Suspiria*.



The central character nobody believes was a staple of Seventies fright flicks.



Sally is dragged to her spooky demise in the chilling climax.

release in Europe. In retrospect, it's also now tempting to fathom how the film might have influenced certain modern-day horror films. Perhaps it was a possible purely horror precursor to *Gremlins* – what with its menacing goblin creatures who are afraid of bright lights. This unsettling TV horror feature – which is now over 40 years old – might have even been the one that gave birth to those nagging fears that something nasty creeps around your bedroom when the lights go out. The film that gave you good reason to yearn for those early hours of comforting daylight to flood the room and eradicate the terrifying prospect of something beastly grabbing your feet beneath the covers.

"It has a real impact, and was written very creatively, and the cast and the direction were very good," considers Darby on the power behind the film. "Quite a few people tell me that they're still scared and that they think about the film every time they go to bed – that's the sort of impact this movie still has."

THROW AWAY YOUR TV

SEEK OUT THESE OTHER UNNERVING MADE-FOR-TV CHILLERS THAT ALSO BROUGHT TERROR STRAIGHT INTO THE LIVING ROOM.



1. DUEL (1971)

Steven Spielberg's TV-movie debut (retrospectively pegged '*Jaws* on wheels') was so impressive it received a theatrical release. Scripted by Richard Matheson, the premise of a man terrorised by a tyrannical trucker broadens the scope of the traditionally studio-confined set to encapsulate the menacing open road. It remains a thrilling Hollywood calling card.



2. DYING ROOM ONLY (1973)

A little-known suspenseful gem penned once again by Matheson that possibly influenced the premise of Jonathan Mostow's 1997 crime mystery *Breakdown*. This stars Cloris Leachman as a frantic wife whose husband goes mysteriously missing after visiting the gents in a seedy roadside diner, where the sinister locals remain suspiciously tight-lipped.



3. TRILOGY OF TERROR (1975)

Karen Black stars in a trio of terror tales penned, again, by Matheson. However, it's the third and final story that truly terrorises. Entitled 'Amelia' and claustrophobically confined to the set of the protagonist's apartment, it tells of a cursed Zuni fetish doll that comes to murderous life. It remains terrifying to this day.



4. SALEM'S LOT (1979)

This tale-end-of-the-Seventies Stephen King TV miniseries adaptation was directed by genre veteran Tobe Hooper, and benefitted greatly from the casting of James Mason. But it's the iconic image of a little vampire boy knocking on his brother's window that remains memorably nightmare-inducing.



5. SOMEONE'S WATCHING ME! (1978)

Before *Halloween*, John Carpenter helmed this still tense and voyeuristic made-for-TV marvel that was clearly influenced by Hitchcock's *Rear Window*. It's set in a high-rise apartment, and concerns Lauren Hutton's sassy reporter being repeatedly tormented by an unseen homicidal peeing tom neighbour who lives across the block.

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DO YOU KNOW THE BIG BANG THEORY LIKE SHELDON KNOWS THEORETICAL PHYSICS, LEONARD KNOWS EXPERIMENTAL PHYSICS AND HOWARD KNOWS HIS MUM? FIND OUT WITH OUR QUIZ...

THE ROOMMATE CONUNDRUM

1. What number is Leonard and Sheldon's apartment?
2. Which star of *The Walking Dead* tries to warn Leonard from moving in with Sheldon in the episode 'The Staircase Implementation'?
3. What animal features on the apartment's flag?
4. According to the Roommate Agreement, what temperature should the thermostat be kept at?
5. What is written on Leonard's wall when he moves in?

THE GEEK INFERENCE

6. What is the name of Sheldon's re-imagining of Rock, Paper, Scissors?
7. Which *Star Trek* veteran appears in the episode 'The Hot Troll Deviation'?
8. After the gang all turn up as The Flash, what does Sheldon change into for Penny's Halloween party in Season One?
9. Which two *Star Wars* actors appear in the episode 'The Convention Conundrum?
10. Kirk or Picard?

THE NAME CONJECTURE

11. What is Howard's mother's name?
12. What is the name of Stuart Bloom's comic-book store?
13. Who is the head of the Physics Department at the California Institute of Technology?
14. What is the name given to the group's bowling team?
15. What did Howard want his astronaut nickname to be, and what did it become?

THE TRIVIA SUPPOSITION

16. What game does Penny get addicted to in the episode 'The Barbarian Sublimation'?
17. How many cats does Sheldon acquire in an attempt to replace Amy?
18. What is the full name of Howard's killer robot, nicknamed MONTE?
19. Which member of the gang suffers from being lactose intolerant?
20. Which city is Amy originally from?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

SHELDON COOPER

Showing off your skills is like crack to you, but you might want to ease up on the gloating. No one ever got laid just because they scored full marks on a TV quiz in a magazine.

11-15

LEONARD HOFSTADTER

Owning quizzes isn't everything to you. But you do like to get involved, and love when you get more answers than your friends. You remind them of your victories at every opportunity.

6-10

RAJ KOOTHRAPPALI

You are a brain box; you just need to believe in yourself more. Your people skills need work. You'd make the best quiz team captain if the team only consisted of you and a pencil.

0-5

HOWARD WOLOWITZ

You know what you know better than anyone, but you're always the butt of the joke. Maybe you just need to get off your arse and go earn that PhD you've had your eye on.

ANSWERS: **1.** 4A **2.** STEVEN YEUN **3.** LION **4.** 72 DEGREES **5.** DIE SHELDON DIE **6.** ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS, LIZARD, SPOCK **7.** GEORGE TAKEI **8.** THE DOPPLER EFFECT **9.** CARRIE FISHER AND JAMES EARL JONES **10.** ORIGINAL SERIES OVER NEXT GENERATION, BUT PICARD OVER KIRK **11.** DEBBIE WOLOWITZ **12.** THE COMIC CENTER OF PASADENA **13.** ERIC GABLEHAUSER **14.** THE WESLEY CRUSHERS **15.** ROCKET MAN AND FRUIT LOOPS **16.** AGE OF CONAN **17.** 25 **18.** MOBILE OMNIDIRECTIONAL NEUTRALIZATION TERMINATION ERADICATOR **19.** LEONARD **20.** GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA

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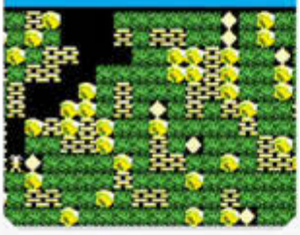
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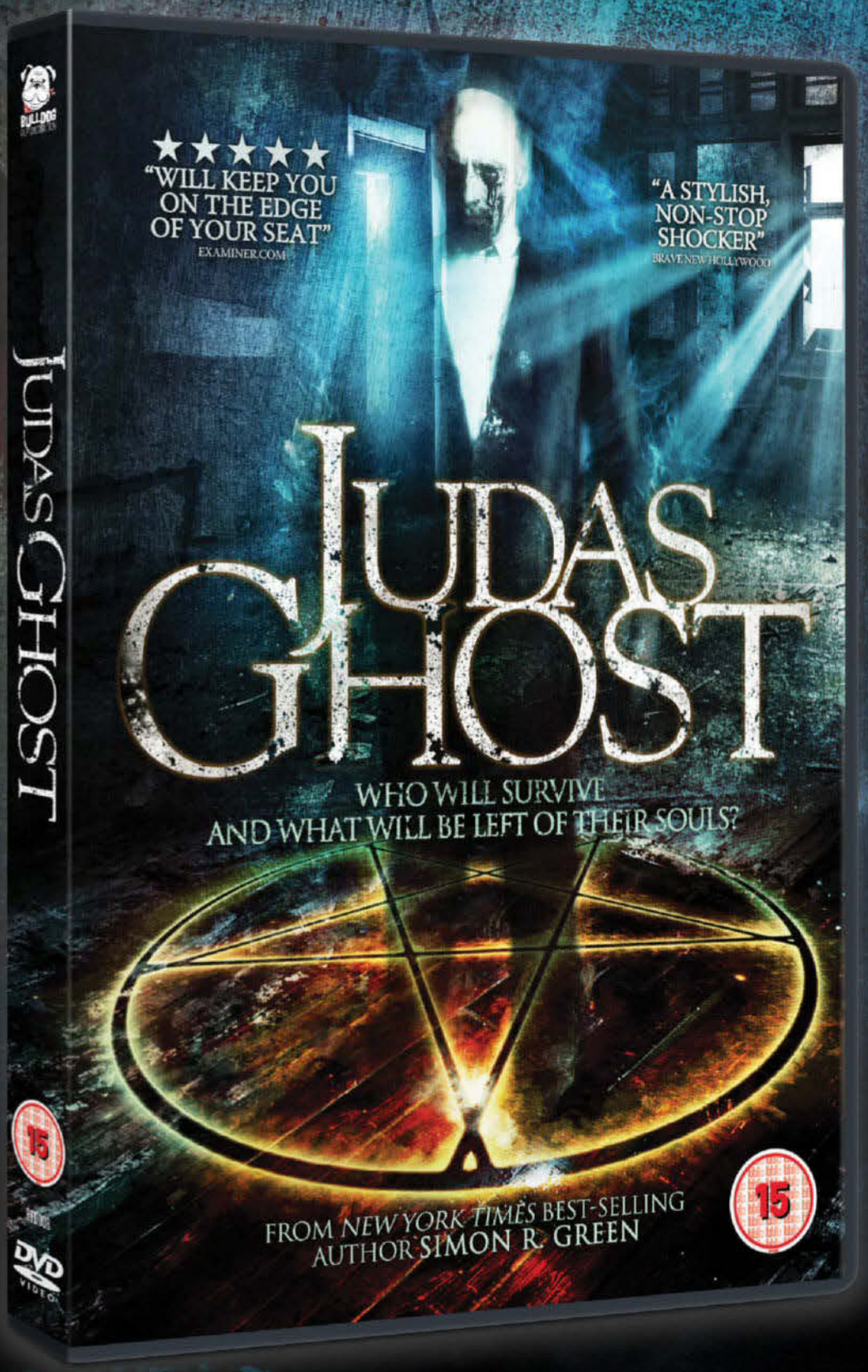
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